

Travelers needing to keep in touch

Some versions offer calls heard round the world

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By Marc Saltzman
Special for USA TODAY

Dan Werth understands the importance of staying in touch while traveling.

As regional general sales manager for Miller Brewing, the Irvine, Calif.-based executive spends time overseas — in London, Johannesburg and Hong Kong — but still must be reached by customers, co-workers and family.

"My cellphone is my most important traveling companion," Werth says. "Frankly, I was surprised how easy it was to get phone service overseas. I just stepped off the plane, and it worked."

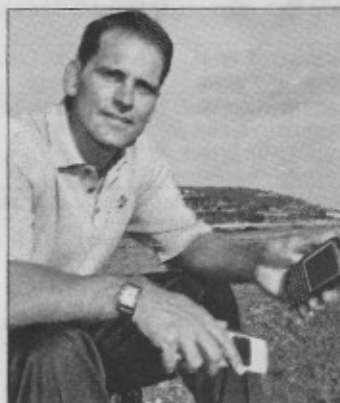
Because of his job, Werth's cell-

phone carrier, Cingular Wireless, urged him to pick up a "world phone." He opted for the sleek Motorola Razr V3, which works in more than 130 countries and costs about \$350 with a two-year plan and a rebate from Cingular.

It's not as easy for people who don't travel enough to invest in a world phone. Even if a U.S. cellphone works on the network in a foreign country, it probably doesn't operate on the right frequency. By knowing a little about how cellphones work, you can stay within reach outside U.S. borders.

There are two main cellphone network platforms in the USA: GSM (global system for mobile communications) and CDMA (code division multiple access). Cingular and T-Mobile run on the GSM network. Verizon Wireless and Sprint PCS operate on CDMA.

Because GSM is the most commonly used wireless platform in the world, Cingular Wireless and T-



By Bob Riha Jr., USA TODAY

Phone home: Dan Werth counts on his cellphone and BlackBerry to keep in touch while abroad.

Mobile subscribers will find it easier to get service overseas. But the phone must be tri-band, which means it's compatible with three frequencies, or quad-band, which works on four. More than 90% of

can try far-reaching cellphones

GSM phones work only on the USA's 1900 frequency, according to Telestial, a telecommunications provider based in San Diego.

Most carriers require users to activate a phone for international use by calling customer service or stopping by a retail store. Be sure to find out the carrier's roaming rates and long-distance fees.

Bill Hague, executive vice president international at Cingular Wireless, has a tip for world travelers: "To save money, use your phone's text-messaging feature instead of voice communication."

CDMA customers, such as those on Verizon Wireless or Sprint PCS, must jump through a few extra hoops to get international service.

Frequent world travelers can purchase a hybrid phone such as the Samsung A790, available for about \$350 with a two-year plan on the Verizon Wireless or Sprint PCS networks. A hybrid works on both GSM and CDMA.

CDMA customers also can rent a GSM phone from their carrier. Call the company at least five business days before the trip, and they will send a GSM phone with instructions to transfer an existing phone number to the loaner phone.

The costs of renting a global phone can be confusing. Sprint PCS, for example, charges about \$35 a week. Customers also pay \$14.95 for shipment, \$36 for activation, \$6 for an international roaming option and a roaming fee of \$1.50 a minute for incoming and outgoing calls.

A GSM phone rental through Verizon Wireless costs \$3.99 a day, plus a roaming fee of \$1.49 a minute in most countries. International long-distance rates also apply on incoming calls only; the rate is 65 cents a minute for most European countries but can climb to \$9.17 in other countries.

Some countries support the CDMA platform, including Canada, Mexico, South Korea, Bermuda,

Dominican Republic, Israel and Venezuela. Roaming rates still apply, but you won't have to buy or rent a GSM phone. Other options:

► **Foreign cellphone.** Some travelers prefer to rent a cellphone once they arrive in another country. Be sure to verify a company's reputation and pricing plans.

► **E-mail.** Some mobile executives prefer e-mail. A GSM-based BlackBerry from Research in Motion or a Treo handset from PalmOne are ideal. Quad-band devices, such as the BlackBerry 7100t or PalmOne Treo 600/650, allow for international roaming.

► **Prepaid SIM card.** If you own a GSM phone, it might be more economical to buy a prepaid SIM (subscriber identity module) card at your destination or from a U.S. company such as Telestial. A SIM card allows you to talk for a certain amount of minutes and is rechargeable. Call your provider to set up your phone for such SIM cards.