



XIPWIRE makes bills payable by text

XIPWIRE service, founded by a Penn alum, can now be used to pay Phillynet bills

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Residents of Campus Apartments housing now have a new way to pay for their utilities.

The company's subsidiary, Campus Technologies, is now using XIPWIRE, a mobile payment provider which allows users to send and receive money via text message.

Launched in Philadelphia last May, XIPWIRE allows residents to pay their bills for Phillynet, the residences' provider for satellite television, Internet and phone services.

While students can still pay for Phillynet using existing options such as sending a check by mail, using a credit or debit card online or paying in office, the new system is "designed to be a universal service," XIPWIRE founder and Penn Engineering alumnus Sharif Alexandre said.

The company is the first text-message payment system which works on all major mobile service providers in the country, and is free for Campus Apartments residents through the end of 2010.

Customers begin the payment process by creating an account at XIPWIRE's website and linking a cell phone and credit or debit card to the account.

Users pay by sending a text to the service's five-digit number and then type the specific amount of money they intend to send to another XIPWIRE user. After sending money, residents receive a text from the service to verify their payment, to which they must reply with a personal identification number to confirm the transfer.

"Talking about it takes more time than actually doing it," Alexandre said of the system's ease.

Laura Van De Pette, a representative from the Brownstein Group, a firm which represents Campus Apartments and XIPWIRE, explained that the housing company prides itself on being able to answer all students' technology needs, and XIPWIRE is "just another offering."

Alexandre spent two years developing the plan for his company after realizing the popularity of text-message payments in other countries.

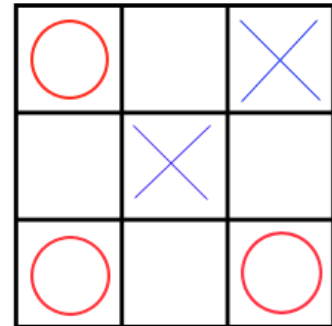
Penn is the first college in the nation to receive the technology in its off-campus residences.

While only Phillynet customers can use the service now, Alexandre said that more merchants in University City will adopt the technology next month.

"The evolution of the phone is basically turning it into your wallet," Alexandre added.

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