

Wave and pay on the way

MANY PEOPLE COORDINATE most of their professional and personal lives through their mobile phones. Now the nation's largest players in this industry are working to enable customers to use their phones as a wallet.

This new payment method, often called "wave and pay", could become common currency for paying for shop goods by 2013, according to Internet-based market-research company YouGov.

Russell Feldman, YouGov technology and telecom consultant, believes this to be the case, even though a YouGov poll of 2,000 people found just 23 per cent of Britons were interested in using their mobile phone instead of cash. However, 48 per cent of those surveyed who said they were not in a hurry to use the new technology, also called near-field communication (NFC), were nonetheless interested in it. Their reticence stemmed from caution: they want to wait and see if any technical issues need to be ironed out first.

"There will always be consumer concerns about adopting any new technology, from data security to



theft, changing mobile providers to correcting mistaken payments," says Feldman. He feels that consumers will need to see these worries addressed before they wholeheartedly embrace mobile payments.

According to Feldman, it became clear at this summer's NFC Payments Europe conference in London that the turning point would be this year and the tipping point next year. But operators, retailers and banks need to pull in the same direction first.

Feldman believes that once Google's NFC payments service, Google Wallet, takes off, it might give those involved in this field the impetus needed to make it available. And Vodafone, O2, Everything Everywhere, Orange and T-Mobile have recently formed a partnership to develop a wave-and-pay platform, also called m-commerce, in the UK.

Technology experts believe it is cooperation such as this that will make all the difference.

To see the full YouGov survey, go to <http://today.yougov.co.uk/consumer/mobile-money>.

—Andrew Don

Mum's not the word any more

THE GOVERNMENT is continuing to take steps to reform parental leave.

Women in the UK can currently take up to a year off, with six weeks at 90 per cent of average gross weekly earnings, followed by 33 weeks at £128.73, or 90 per cent of average gross weekly earnings—whichever is the lower. This is known as statutory maternity pay (SMP).

Employed fathers receive only two paid weeks, which the Government deems to be inflexible and not supportive of shared parenting.

Now ministers are consulting on a new system of flexible parental leave with a view to implement it beginning in 2015. This would build on the additional paternity leave (APL) regulations agreed to by the former government but which only came into force this April.

APL gives employed fathers a right to take up to six months of extra leave for children due on or after 3 April 2011, up to their first birthday. This can be taken once the mother has returned to work after 20 weeks.

Some of the leave may be paid if taken during the mother's legal maternity pay period after she returns to work—in other words, between weeks 21 and 39. This is paid at 90 per cent of earnings up to the same standard rate as SMP for 39 weeks.

However, ministers hope to introduce a fully flexible system of shared parental leave in 2015 whereby both parents could choose to take leave at the same time, or in chunks, with employers' agreement, rather than a continuous block.

To see what the Federation of Small Businesses has to say about the proposals, go to www.fsb.org.uk/ and search for "parental leave". —AD

Get ready, get started

IF YOU'RE AN entrepreneur, or thinking about becoming one, mark 14 to 20 November on your calendar. That's Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW), with thousands of events in more than 100 countries, aimed at entrepreneurs everywhere. Activities include virtual and face-to-face events, large-scale competitions and intimate networking gatherings.

"Global Entrepreneurship Week 2011 will [feature] more than 40,000 events, engaging roughly 40 million entrepreneurs in more than 110 countries around the world," says Jonathan Ortman, president of Global Entrepreneurship Week.

Created by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation (www.kauffman.org), the world's largest foundation dedicated to entrepreneurship, GEW will feature programmes and competitions at local universities and colleges, secondary schools, government agencies and entrepreneurial support organisations for budding entrepreneurs. Each participating organisation is encouraged to create its own unique event, and GEW offers four featured activities for aspiring and existing entrepreneurs alike.

Startup Open. Open to entrepreneurs

who have just started, or are about to start, a new venture, the 50 most promising start-ups will be recognised as "The GEW 50".

Cleantech Open Global Ideas Competition.

Sharing the best clean technology ideas from around the world, finalists will deliver a five-minute pitch to an audience of investors and entrepreneurs, with a chance of winning a prize of US\$100,000 in support and services of help turn their idea into a business.

Your Big Year. Two winners will receive a year-long trip around the world, meeting

leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs in different countries. Participants must be over the age of 18 and register by 3 November.

Startup Weekend. Developers, marketers, product managers and start-up enthusiasts will gather to share ideas and launch new start-ups. Attendees in dozens of cities will determine the most promising concepts, focusing on customer development, idea validation and creating a viable product, competing for prizes to help speed them to launch.

To view a list of participating countries and organisations, or to learn more about GEW, visit www.unleashingideas.org.



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