

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Verizon's decision confirms landlines as yesteryear relic

This week the chief executive of Verizon Communications declared his company is willing to hang up on its landline phone business.

It's not certain if the dirt around Alexander Graham Bell's grave is disturbed, but this is a significant bow to the ever-changing forces of personal communication.

PHONE SERVICE

Verizon, after all, is one of the largest descendants of the old Bell system named for a man considered the inventor of first practical telephone.

Speaking to a Goldman Sachs investor conference Thursday, Ivan Seidenberg said his company is simply no longer concerned with telephones that are connected with wires, the New York Times reported.

That's not entirely unexpected. The death knell for wire phone communications has been clanging loudly since the beginning of the new millennium. Cell phones have explosively turned the idea

of immediate communication – at competitively cheap prices – into an expectancy of basic phone service. Cable companies have nibbled more than a large chunk of the landline business away with customer deals that package Internet and landline service into monthly cable bill packages.

Verizon signaled it was getting that message loud and clear when it started offering similar packages and adding a charge to bills when customers drop their landline service.

But don't cry for Verizon. It has much bigger fish to fry. It controls the largest mobile phone company in the country. The company's early investments in fiber optics has given it the capacity for expansion and speed of service that seems nearly unmatched at this point.

It will still offer traditional service, but only as an add-on – sort of like an anachronistic outreach to those who still pine for conversation via a phone cord. Mr. Bell would still be proud.