

In-Store Wi-Fi Is Free, but Not Commercial-Free

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People who like to use their laptops, iPhones and other devices in public are always so delighted when they stumble on a wireless hot spot in an unexpected place. Will they be pleased enough to look at ads before getting their broadband fix?

AnchorFree, a company in Sunnyvale, Calif., that is two and a half years old, has introduced a service that lets merchants of any size - from a large bookstore chain to a mom-and-pop restaurant - offer free advertising-supported Wi-Fi to customers on the store premises. People who are shopping or eating in an AnchorFree location will see banner ads on their screens or short video spots or both before their browsing session.

Among the major companies that have signed up to advertise are American Express, Circuit City, Clorox, Ford, Kaiser Permanente, McDonald's, Toyota and Major League Baseball.

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