Using Your Wi-Fi Media Box

28 ideas for digital distribution

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Introduction

For years, Missionary Aviation Fellowship's pilots carried a box on planes containing Bibles and Christian literature. When they landed, these resources would be offered for sale. Eventually, due to the popularity of smartphones and the weight of books, they switched to carrying less printed resources. Instead, a Wi-Fi Media Box was often substituted. It weighed almost nothing and could hold more resources than a physical box.

What exactly is a Wi-Fi Media Box (WMB)? It is a device that creates a Wi-Fi hotspot that acts like the Internet—but isn't. The hotspot created by the WMB shows up on a user's device as a Wi-Fi network. Yet the content available is only what the owner of the unit loads into the WMB's memory. Users cannot connect to the Internet through it.

Some may remember the original "BibleBox" project offered by Campbell Smythe in 2014. It was based on an off-the-shelf portable router that could be modified to serve digital content. When the production of that particular portable router ended, several organizations created WMBs to continue meeting the need for a device to distribute digital resources.

Purpose

Wi-Fi Media Boxes can be used in so many ways! This paper presents an assortment of situations in which a WMB could be used. Static uses, portable uses, content ideas, available hardware options, and software available for sharing content are explained. Every idea will not work in every setting. Choose ones that have potential and give them a try. Be creative and adapt these ideas to even more situations.

Static Uses

Office Lobby

When visitors arrive at an organization's office, they sit in a waiting room until called in for their meeting. The lobby is a perfect place to set up a WMB that offers visitors something to watch, read or listen to on their device while waiting. The receptionist can encourage them to connect and walk them through the process. Visual instructions can also be posted.

This idea can be used for any office lobby. But if the organization is involved in media production, Bible translation, training, literacy or a myriad of other activities, it can promote its own products and work via the WMB. If selling products, a promotional video or part of a video can be made available, with a mention at the end of how to purchase the resource from the receptionist. Resources can also be made available at no charge.

Church

A pastor wants his congregation to have access to a set of digital resources on a Sunday morning, but not through the Internet where email and Facebook could become distractions. He sets up a BibleBox in the church and provides access to a Wi-Fi Bible and other digital resources for any Wi-Fi users. Those on the Wi-Fi begin discussing anonymously points the pastor is making during his sermon using the incorporated chat feature. (Source: biblebox.org)

Clinic/Hospital Waiting Room

Visitors to a hospital, clinic or health post frequently have long waits before attended to. A WMB in the waiting area can serve them in several ways. Often, patients don't know what to expect when they see a nurse or doctor. A video or presentation can be created that walks them through what their visit to the hospital might look like. This video can be featured on the WMB. If health-related resources (videos, presentations, PDFs, etc.) are available digitally, those can be shared with visitors. Copyright-free entertainment can also be loaded on the WMB to give visitors something with which to pass the time.

Local Shop/Store

A believer who owns a small store or shop sets up a WMB loaded with both evangelistic and discipleship materials. A notification is posted on the wall behind the counter, making customers aware that a Wi-Fi network is available. The shop owner actively encourages patrons to connect and download resources, and asks returning customers what was downloaded and how it impacted them. The shop owner updates the content every few months.

Local School

A WMB placed at a school can benefit students, teachers and parents, and help promote Scripture and Scripture-based media in the languages spoken at the school. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools switched to only offering classes on-line. Unfortunately, students without an Internet connection in their homes were unable to access the video lessons. A WMB can be used to solve this problem by working with the educational institution to make the video lessons available via Wi-Fi at the school. A student needs only to go to the school with a phone, tablet or computer, connect to the WMB, and download the video lessons needed for the day or week. The rest of the week, the student can watch the videos on the device without needing to connect to the Internet.

Another option for using a WMB at an educational institution is to make educational materials available. Materials can be found at http://rachelfriends.org/rachel-pi-howto.html This site offers massive collections of educational materials in English, Spanish, French and several other languages which can be loaded on a MicroSD card. These include Math, Science and Literature resources, Khan Academy videos, a compact version of Wikipedia, and more. One person who set up a WMB at a school in Africa discovered the teachers accessed the materials even more than the students. They were brushing up on topics and discovering new ways to teach concepts to students!

Partnership with the local school administration is important to make this arrangement work. The details of ownership, administration, and expectations should be worked out in the planning stages.

Transportation Terminal

A transportation terminal (airport waiting area, bus/train station, ferry terminal, camel watering oasis) is an excellent place to set up a WMB, if permission can be secured. In these locations, people are often looking for something to help pass the time. If free media is available, they are likely to engage with it. Depending on the size of the venue and the number of people who could be connecting, it might be necessary to set up multiple units to handle the load.

In these locations, it is very important to post step-by-step instructions on how to connect and access the content. The instructions should include photos and/or screenshots that demonstrate each step.

Apartment Complex

Anyone who lives in an apartment complex can easily install a WMB in a window or on a windowsill to give surrounding apartments access to the Wi-Fi signal. It is important to carefully consider what name to use for the SSID, the name that people see on their device when looking for a network to connect to. Depending on the type of content being distributed, it can be named "Free Movies," "Free Apps," or "Free Audio."

As people begin to connect, it is important to look at the statistics. Seeing what resources are most popular helps the administrator of the WMB to know what the felt needs are and offer more of the same type of resource. It is also recommended to update the content on a regular basis. In this usage scenario, posting new content monthly is optimal.

If the purpose is pre-evangelism or evangelism, learn how to use the "Contact" function available on the WMB. This allows users to contact the administrator of the WMB and make a person-to-person connection. Users should be encouraged to make use of the "Contact" function if they have any questions or comments about the materials offered. In this way, follow-up can be done with people who indicate they have made a decision to follow Christ

and need to be discipled. Look for ways to connect these new believers to a local fellowship. Warning: be prepared for offensive responses as well.

Near a Bunk House

Seasonal workers from several countries are housed for the summer in a bunkhouse just a short distance from a church member's home. After the church member asked what languages were spoken by those being housed there, a Wi-Fi Media Box was loaded with Scripture-based media in those languages. Several copyright-free radio dramas, cartoons and audio books in English were also included.

The church member tested the signal strength at the bunkhouse and was satisfied it would provide good coverage. Printed flyers explained how to connect to the Wi-Fi Media Box in Tagalog, Spanish and English and the bunkhouse manager was asked to post them in a high-traffic area.

Public Transportation (bus, ferry, taxi)

A WMB is set up in a bus, taxi or ferry that automatically turns on when the vehicle is started at the beginning of the day. The driver promotes the Wi-Fi network to riders, encouraging them to connect and explore the available resources. Visual instructions show riders how to connect.

In the case where riders use the same vehicle on a regular basis, the content should change frequently so riders have a reason to continue connecting. Portion out the content in "bite-sized" segments. Specific Bible stories or chapters of the Bible can be made available, with a new portion appearing each week.

Municipality

A resident of a small town speaks with the mayor, explaining what the Wi-Fi Media Box does and how it works. He offers to put any documents and information from the municipality on the WMB as a service to the community, so long as he can also offer digital Scripture materials. The municipality issues him a certificate allowing him to operate the WMB. It provides that community both Scripture resources and municipality resources.

Conferences

A conference presenter brings a WMB with outlines, videos and audio messages for attendees to download. To promote a book he has written, he might even offer a sample PDF of the first chapter or two.

A conference host sets up a WMB with schedules, conference center information, maps and local attractions to help attendees become familiar with the location. Pre-made images of the conference that are sized appropriately for sharing on social media are also offered. Attendees are encouraged to download and post these images to their social media accounts.

If the conference is bringing together a number of organizations, each organization can give its digital resources to the administrator of the WMB, who loads them on the unit. Attendees can connect to the WMB and download or stream the resources they choose.

Market Stall

A woman selling produce brings her WMB to the market every day. She plugs it into a battery pack and after a few minutes, checks to make sure it's working properly. As she converses with customers, she asks if they have connected to the Wi-Fi available in the market. She helps people get connected and points out specific videos and audio portions that the customer might want to download and listen to or watch on the bus ride home. For repeat customers, she recommends downloading shorter segments of audio Scripture, like a specific chapter, that can be listened to several times that week. She converses with them the following week about the chapter and encourages them to download the next chapter.

Scripture Dedication Events

Large numbers of people will gather to celebrate the arrival of the printed Scriptures and dedicate them to the Lord. During that event, several WMBs will offer the same Scriptures being dedicated, but in the form of an app. Many other digital resources will be made available on the WMBs: the *JESUS* film, the audio of the entire New Testament, locally-produced Christian music videos, audio dramas, PowerPoint presentations and more.

Helpers will pass through the crowds, assisting the attendees to connect to the WMB and download resources.

For more on using WMBs at a Scripture dedication or other large event, visit https://www.scripture-engagement.org/content/digital-distribution-bible-dedications

Portable Uses

Village/Community Visits

An organization prepares for a visit to a remote community by loading the Wi-Fi Media Box with resources that meet the felt needs of the particular community it will be visiting. Upon arriving at that community, the WMB is plugged into into a large rechargeable battery and turned on. Announcements are made in the community that free resources are available on the Wi-Fi network. Every person working for the organization is trained in helping people get connected to the WMB and explains how to stream or download the resources to a phone, tablet or computer. The WMB stays turned on until they leave the community.

A church does visitation in a community and leaves its WMB turned on in the car while going go door-to-door. When the visitors are talking with members of a household, they help those they are visiting get connected to the WMB in order to download resources to their phone.

A pilot flies to remote villages and brings a WMB along. Each time he lands, he turns the WMB on and announces that it is available. If anyone needs help, the pilot has been trained how to get others connected and how to download resources. The content can include evangelism and discipleship materials for pastors, Christian music, videos, recorded sermons and much more. Upon returning to his home base, he recharges the battery so it's ready for the next trip.

A pastor or missionary who travels on a river to visit different communities brings his WMB along and, just like the pilot, helps people get connected and download resources. For trips that last several days, a solar charged, high capacity battery is used.

A Christian field worker travels from the city to more remote areas of her region to meet with local church members and leaders. She takes a fully charged WMB with her to various meetings where resources are made available and downloaded to Android smartphones and tablets. The church leaders and members then share these through their device with others in their local villages, making Bible teaching more easily available and frequent. (Source: biblebox.org)

Dental/Medical Teams

Medical and dental teams can use WMBs to distribute information specific to their visit. In one case, a video was created in the local language to demonstrate good tooth brushing

techniques, what foods caused cavities, and the parents' responsibility to care for their children's teeth until they were old enough to do it themselves. This type of video can be loaded on the WMB and shared with every community during medical team visits.

If health-related resources (videos, presentations, PDFs, etc.) are available digitally, they can be shared with those who are waiting for their appointment. Copyright-free entertainment can also be loaded on the WMB to give visitors something with which to pass the time.

On the Job

A food court cleaner keeps a WMB secure in his cleaning cart during the day. It is plugged into an external battery pack so he has power for his entire shift. Patrons at the food court discover the Wi-Fi hotspot and the resources he is sharing. Regular customers often access the short videos he makes available to them while on their breaks. (Source: biblebox.org)

Workshops

A trainer (literacy, pastoral, Scripture-engagement, etc.) holds a workshop in a village that does not have Internet access. In order to avoid passing around thumb drives (notorious for carrying viruses), WMB is loaded with all of the resources in digital form. Workshop attendees download the resources to their computers or phones. At the end of the event, photos and documents can be sent to the trainer via WhatsApp or Xender, who then makes them available on the WMB for anyone to download.

Public Transport

An office worker on his daily commute to work on public transport uses a WMB on the train to make evangelistic resources available over the Wi-Fi hotspot to anyone who connects to it.

While Traveling

A businessman waiting for yet another flight connects to the airport Wi-Fi to check and send email. He switches on his WMB and makes 100's of audio sermons available to anyone who connects to his free, secure and private WMB Wi-Fi. (Source: biblebox.org)

Creative Access

A Christian in a country with limited or restricted access to Bible teaching sits in a park with her WMB hotspot active. She can privately and securely make Wi-Fi Bible sermons on video available to those connected to the WMB. (Source: biblebox.org)

Family Road Trip

A WMB can be used when a family is taking a road trip that involves more than just a couple of hours in the car. The WMB can be loaded with movies, audio dramas, sermons, PDFs (my kids love reading PDF versions of comic books), and images (meme collections). Each person

in the car can stream video or audio to their own device simultaneously, or audio programs can be streamed to the car's speakers so everyone can listen to the same program.
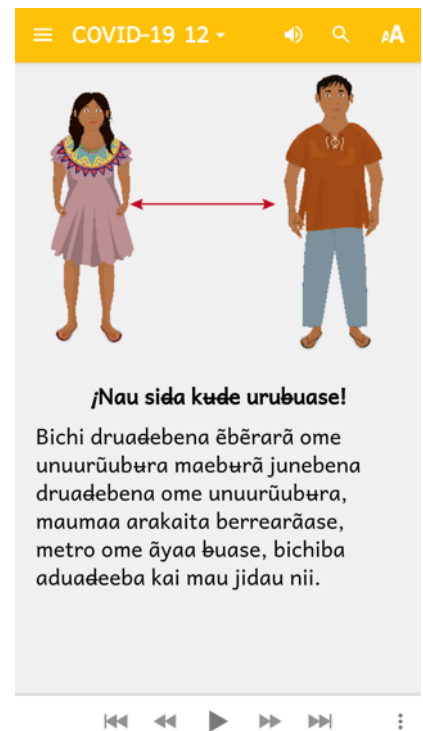
Content Ideas

Health

Recently, a colleague in Colombia used an app template to translate COVID-19 information from Spanish into several indigenous languages. Later, she distributed the apps via WhatsApp to speakers of those languages. This created good-will and trust with those people groups. They now have a favorable view toward her organization, which will increase receptivity toward the Gospel being introduced in the future.

People want to know how to alleviate pain and sickness and feel better physically. It is possible to meet a community's felt need by offering basic health information on a WMB while including Scripture resources for those who want to explore what else is available to them.

Health information can be sourced from government agencies (Ministry of Health, etc.), Non-Government Organizations (Tearfund, World Vision, Save The Children, Doctors Without Borders, etc.) and local private practices. Themes that touch many lives are clean water, personal hygiene, hand washing, tooth care, COVID-19, alcoholism, infant care, caring for burns and wounds, just to mention just a few. To get started, take a look at the many resources offered by Tearfund in English, Spanish and French: https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/

Education

The Wi-Fi Media Box offers an easy way to provide educational materials to individuals or communities with very little effort or cost. World Possible offers free educational resources in English, French and Spanish. These education modules can be downloaded from its website: http://rachelfriends.org/rachel-pi-howto.html Scroll to the bottom of the page and look for "Rachel-USB".

Government Info

Working in cooperation with a local or municipal government, a WMB can provide constituents with important information from government agencies while also serving Scripture content. In this way, Christian organizations can build goodwill with government agencies while achieving their goals, too.

Scripture Distribution

Distributing the Bible (ie. Scripture portions, the New Testament or the entire Bible) electronically has become more and more important over the last several years. As people around the world purchase smartphones and tablets, the demand for the Bible and Scripture resources for these devices continues to increase. WMBs were designed to meet this growing demand and make it easy to distribute Scripture and Scripture-based resources.

Small Portions

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. And if it is seasoned and cooked well, those eating the elephant will ask for more!

This is an important principle of digital distribution. Content should be made available in smaller portions that are more easily "consumed." Rather than offering the entire Bible in audio, consider offering a book at a time, or perhaps even smaller portions. If working with oral-preference learners, divide Scripture portions according to stories or concept blocks.

If distributing a long video, consider dividing it up into shorter, two- or three-minute segments which are easier to watch and share from phone to phone.

PowerPoint presentations can be exported as a series of JPG images, enabling the end user to view the presentation without PowerPoint. If a particular slide impacts someone, having it as a JPG image makes it easy to share with others.

Memory space on people's phones is often quite full. Smaller sized portions of content are easier to make room for than large file. They are also easier to transfer from one phone to another using Bluetooth.

Available Hardware Options

At the time of this writing, there are three Wi-Fi Media Box options. The ConnectBox, The Lightstream Pocket, and the MicroPi. A full evaluation of all three can be viewed/downloaded here:
https://www.scripture-engagement.org/content/which-wifi-media-box

Available Software Options

Currently, there are no software applications that function like a WMB. There are apps like Xender and SHAREit that can pass files directly from one device to another. These apps move files at significantly higher speeds than Bluetooth, and many people around the world already have them installed on their devices. If a person obtains media while in the city,

these programs are useful for sharing those files from phone to phone with others when they return to their village.

WhatsApp is another option for sharing media from phone to phone. It is especially useful if sending files to a group of people. Social media and websites can also be used to share media. However, none of these software options are as versatile as a WMB.

Conclusion

These are several ways in which Wi-Fi Media Boxes can be used to distribute digital resources. May this list be an inspiration to those doing digital distribution, giving a starting point which will then generate new ideas. Please share your distribution stories with the author, for inclusion in future versions of this paper.

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