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**THE
EVANGELIST**

Digital life is sweet in Sweden

LAST year, a guy made half a million dollars for doing absolutely nothing. He announced to the world that he intended to stay at home for a year, and conduct his life through the Internet. He watched sport, had his groceries and meals delivered, read newspapers, books, watched movies, paid bills and did a lot more besides I'm sure!

Personally, even for that kind of money, I can't imagine not leaving my house for over a year but this gimmick does highlight just how much can be done over the web.

However, its genuine usefulness will only become apparent once

domestic broadband is realised, and that is still a long way off.

So what is broadband? Basically, it's a term for a number of communications technologies that vastly increase the amount of information coming into and out of our homes.

It will give us video-on-demand, fast Internet access, teleconferencing, video phones — making our lives easier in ways that we can only begin to imagine.

Take the following scenario of domestic bliss in the Wagner household of the future: It's a mid-winter afternoon. My youngest is crying incessantly, there's nothing on television and there's nothing

decent to eat in the fridge. My wife orders some basic provisions from Waitrose from the monitor in the kitchen while I am in the study on a video conference with a colleague in Los Angeles. When I come out, I find my wife is having our daughter examined by our local doctor through the bedroom television, who reassures us that there's nothing to worry about.

We decide that tonight we'd like to watch *The Fifth Element* after taking delivery of a Chinese meal for me and a Thai meal for my wife. Before the food arrives, I buy tonight's lottery ticket, take a look at video footage of six alternatives for our badly needed beach holiday, check the balance of our joint account, pay some bills, and read my e-mails.

In Scandinavia, recently voted the most connected digital economy on the planet, this could well be a reality today. Why are we so far behind?

It appears that BT has taken an age to release the first step towards this networked nirvana, ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber

Line). ADSL allows us to access broadband services over normal telephone lines. It is a technology that is here and yet is only available from BT and a few small suppliers.

BT charges £150 to install ADSL and £40 a month after that. Madasafish, a reseller of BT's ADSL services is even dealer. Last year Home Choice, another BT reseller, promised fast ADSL Internet access

and TV on demand, for just £40 installation and £26 per month.

Too good to be true? You bet. Our marketing director jumped at the opportunity late last year and it was an unmitigated disaster.

So it's back to the 'World Wide Wait' until industry regulator Ofcom finds its teeth.

Of course, cable modem services from Telewest or NTL offer the same sort of service as ADSL for just £50 installation and £33 per month. But I can't get it in my area. Perhaps the only solution is to move. I quite fancy the idea of surfing the web from my sauna.

● Dan Wagner is CEO of Bright Station, www.brightstation.com

'UK's ADSL system was a disaster for us'

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