

Getting noticed at a noisy event such as CES isn't impossible and it doesn't have to be expensive. Effective communications is all about differentiating yourself from everyone else. It's even better if you can position yourself in a way that negatively positions the competition at the same time.

Brenner Associate's client Seamless Wi-Fi wasn't the biggest company introducing a UMPC (ultra mobile PCs) at CES – not by far. But they did get the bulk of media attention. The reason...strategic communications implemented by senior-level professionals working with both traditional and Internet media.

STRATEGIC NAME
development

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Branding: Dumb Thumbs, Beware

 The [CES in Las Vegas](#), which starts officially on Monday, is already giving us some names that should raise eyebrows. The term for the day is "Dumb Thumb." Now, I have always granted my fingers all pretty much the same intelligence, but because my opposable thumb does make me Homo Sapiens ("man who knows"), I have always privately believed that the thumb was something special. Now, UMPC maker [Seamless Wi-Fi](#) has given us the [S-XGen™](#) which promises to do away with ["dumb thumb" typing](#).

"Dumb Thumb" typing turns out to be Blackberry/Treo style messaging that has execs on subways hunched over their devices looking for all the world like 80s high school kids playing Mattel Electronic Football. The S-XGen combines a cellphone, tablet PC, laptop and PDA. The president and CEO of the company is selling these things with the statement that "fingers are a terrible thing to waste." Elsewhere, they promise to ["turn users into mobile powerhouses, not thumb suckers"](#).

It is indeed true that today's [PDA phones give your thumbs a beating](#) — a year or so ago CNN ran a story on the fact that "users of small gadget keypads feel the effects of overuse."

But should we really be calling those millions of sore thumbs "dumb"? Granted, I suppose there must be legions of yuppies out there with inflamed thumb joints complaining "ouch, my dumb thumb is killing me!" And the term Dumb Thumb, I have found, is occasionally used in the model helicopter field to describe [pushing the sticks in the wrong direction](#).

On the other hand, the rest of us might declare 2006 The Year of the Smart Thumb. Consider how the thumb is used on today's gadgets: it needs a light touch on the iPod's wheel, a firmer touch on the scroll of numerous cell phones and iPod knock offs, and Mozart-like dexterity on Blackberrys. It is used all day while text messaging and dialing. Dumb indeed!

Still, I can see these guys with brand new S-XGens smirking when a colleague pulls out a [Blackberry Pearl](#), saying "Oh, I see you bought another 'dumb thumb' device. Look at mine!"

I just have to ask if at a whopping \$1400 (same as an iMac Core Duo with an extra gig of RAM and a free, thumb-friendly iPod thrown in), if anyone save for the truly geeky, possibly the thumbless or maybe the incurably thumbaphobic is going to give these things the thumbs up.