



By Bob Gatton

November 9, 2006—I know contractors practically run their businesses by cell phone, and I can relate. In 2001 and 2002, I worked from my home for a large corporation. They gave me a cell phone for business use. It worked very well almost everywhere—*except* in my home. Several times a day, I would need to go outside, walk a few doors down the street and check for messages and return missed calls. Taking a quick break and going outside is not a totally bad situation most of the year, but during the winter or heavy rain, not the optimal situation for conducting business.



Enter [zBoost](#), which makes a system that boosts the cell-phone signal in your home or office. The zBoost (retail price \$299.99) has two main parts: an antenna and a base unit. You install the antenna in the highest part of the home or office, and run an RG6 (coax cable) between the antenna and the base station. Plug the base station into a wall outlet, and you are done.

How well did it work? I set up the zBoost system at the home of a friend who constantly complains about his lack of cell phone reception. I went up into his attic with the coax cable attached to the antenna. My friend, on the second floor, attached the other end of the coax cable to the base station and plugged it in. The meter on his cell phone signal immediately went from fluctuating between zero and one bar, to a steady three bars (out of a total of five). Moving the zBoost antenna around the attic increased the number of bars to four. He walked around the house and signal strength was between two and four throughout the home. Very good.

An added benefit: A cell phone that is constantly looking for a signal quickly exhausts its battery. If the signal strength is higher, the battery will last longer.

A couple of points to remember:

1. The antenna works best when it is vertically mounted.
2. If you don't have any cell phone signal, this product will not cure the problem. It takes a weak signal and amplifies it. If there is no signal, there is nothing to amplify.

ZBoost currently offers two models for home-office use, the YX500-CEL for 800 MHz phones and the YX500-PCS for 1900 MHz phones. T-Mobile, Metro PCS, Suncom, Cricket and Sprint operate on the 1900MHz band. With these carriers, the YX500-PCS is the correct model for you. Other major carriers, such as Cingular and Verizon, can operate on both 800 and 1900MHz frequencies. It is important to determine which frequency your provider is using in your local area. Contact the local Cingular or Verizon office to determine which frequency is used in your area. A model for Nextel phones will be coming in early 2007.

If you have good reception in your home or office, \$300 is a lot to pay to increase the signal a bar or two. But if the signal is not acceptable, \$300 is a bargain. I would have gladly paid \$300 for the zBoost YX500 a few years ago, when I had a different cell phone, even if I could not put it on my expense account.

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