



Islander February 2011 Technology Update

The Androids are coming! Report from the Mobile World Congress - formerly known as 3GSM

This last week we attended the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona, where the next generation of cellphones are showcased. In today's world where Apple has created and sharply led the smartphone race off the start line, leaving the once great (just two years ago) Nokia flailing in their wake, desperately trying to trip them up, like a bad loser, by issuing law suits. At the same time another competitor has quietly got on with what Nokia should have been doing by putting their energy into developing an alternative "complete smartphone software solution" which offers better features than the iPhone. The new kid on the smart phone block is Google. Consultants Accenture referred last week at the MWC to their operating system software, Android, as a new phenomenon. At the show last week nearly every conversation ended up with one subject: Google and its Android Mobile Phone operating system.

Nokia did do their best to overshadow the show debate for the week by announcing on the eve of MWC their decision to opt for Microsoft's Windows Phone 7 (WP7) platform as its primary smartphone operating system, rather than Android. Stephen Elop, CEO of Nokia, told reporters at the press conference that the decision was prompted by a desire to avoid a "duopoly" in the mobile industry between Google/Nokia and Apple and they wanted to create a third challenger. The two firms are positioning the alliance as the third major smartphone ecosystem alongside Apple's iOS and the Android community.

The deal will also see many of their service offerings - such as Nokia's Ovi maps and Microsoft's Bing search engine - pooled together, while Nokia's Apps store (Ovi) is to be rolled into WP7's Marketplace.

Nokia was unable to give any firm commitments on when its first WP7 phone would appear but was hopeful for a launch before the end of the year. Nokia stated that their investment in Symbian would continue however there was no mention of MeeGo, Nokia's "next generation platform strategy" with Intel apart from the fact that the first MeeGo phone is due later this year.

The deal was seen by the markets as a positive deal for Microsoft but not for Nokia with shares dropping 15% on the day.

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At the show every major handset announced uses Android and almost every tablet is Android based. Google CEO Eric Schmidt stated that “Android phone activations were now running at more than 300,000 a day with 170 Android-based handsets currently available from 27 device vendors - making it the world’s fastest-growing mobile platform”. He claimed that such scale made Android a compelling prospect for developers. “Developers think ‘mobile first’ because they know this is where there is scale and growth; they also go where the money is.”

The growing army of software developers is absolutely crucial to the success of Android. There are currently 150,000 apps in the Android Apps Store whose number has tripled in the last 9 months. Most of the best Android apps are still made by Google but this appears to be changing with some new, third party Android apps winning awards at the Show.

Also a number of new Android based tablets were announced at the show including the Motorola XOOM using “Honeycomb” which is a version of Android version 3.0. Samsung’s Galaxy Tab tablet will follow and use the Honeycomb operating systems once launched. We have been trialling the very lovely Samsung Galaxy, Android based handset, in the office. LG announced a 3D tab with a 3D camera using Android. This definitely was a gimmick and requires a bit more work! HTC also launched an Android based tablet using a current version of the software but with an upgrade path.

Capacity Crunch

Apart from Android the second biggest focus was the Capacity Crunch, as written about in this very column last month, and how this is going to be addressed by bandwidth management and new generation networks (4G & LTE) and general data delivery mechanisms (cloud based services).

Eric Schmidt also said during his keynote speech at the MWC last week that he believes the rollout of LTE networks and new cloud based services this year will mark the start of a new era for mobile innovation. “LTE will provide the platform for a set of new mobile applications that we can only begin to imagine.”

New apps of interest to yachts

We are always looking for apps that are particularly relevant to yachting. The apps pavilion had a lot of emphasis on mobile money and mobile health. The mobile money falls into two broad categories – payments for goods via the SIM card and connection to authenticated credit card payment systems. Payments for

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goods and services via your cell phone SIM card can already be seen in some countries where you can pay your parking fees or make a purchase from a vending machine by using your cell phone.

The mobile health, and particularly the iPhone apps, looked very interesting with a whole array of mobile ECG and monitoring products, which could tie in well with remote medical services for yachts.

The convergence of the various map apps with marketing and location awareness is another interesting development. When a yacht comes into port, the captain will have a list of pre-saved categories on his phone or tablet with all the local marine businesses. Kind of makes the paper based yachting directories obsolete, unless they have their own app that will identify them.

Google showed off a new Android app called 'Movie Studio,' which allows users to record, edit and distribute movies directly from a tablet. Some yachts already do this for clients with very complex and expensive equipment.

And finally:

Another Capacity Crunch Statistic: did you know that 35 hours of video is being uploaded to YouTube every single minute?

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