

Welcome to the February edition of the Open Mobile Media newsletter – including my take on last week’s activity at the Mobile World Congress; but first, a general word – to say thank you all for your support.

I was personally blown away by the sheer volume of support I encountered for the Open Mobile Summit, in Barcelona last week. Thank you all for the many introductions made, and the clever and thoughtful suggestions as to how we can improve and evolve the event. It really was a great feeling seeing so many friendly faces, and having the luxury of sitting down and talking with you all.

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*Highlights from the MWC: Thieves in Barcelona

We’ve all heard the stories about pick-pockets in Barcelona...as signs at the exit of the MWC site at the Fira de Montjuic warned expo visitors to take off their badges ‘for their own safety’. Goodness, I’ve been robbed 3 times on the streets of Barce myself, back in the days when I used to live there.

But the real ‘ladrones’ in Barcelona this year were apparently Google and Apple – accused of stealing operator’s revenues. One brave soul – presumably an operator – dared challenge Eric Schmitt in the Q&A following Google’s keynote on this directly. He said, and I’m paraphrasing here – that all these apps and Google Wave and so forth are all well and good but Google was (and I quote) ‘stealing operator’s minutes’.

Earlier that day, Vittorio Colao used his keynote this year to sound a warning to the industry that Google was too powerful in the market. He specifically referenced Google’s dominance in mobile search, stated that Vodafone was considering changing its default search engine, and called for the European Commission to ‘examine the whole value chain’. Meanwhile, Steve Jobs was named ‘personality of the year’ at the Mobile World Congress, which didn’t sit well with many attendees who have found it hard to find their value in Apple’s value chain. It was a rather odd accolade for the GSMA to give to an individual / organisation that rather pointedly abstains from participation in any ‘industry’ activities, preferring the willie wonka approach to innovation behind closed doors.

Operators fought back against the open platforms / apps world with a major announcement on Monday of the WAC initiative – a consortium of 24 Operators, backing web standards (who’d have thought it, 5 years ago, that operators would be backing the open web?). Hat’s off to LiMo for proactively supporting this initiative too, which highlights their role as a counterbalance to the device directed platforms.

Whatever the drivers, any initiatives that stand a real chance to address fragmentation should be encouraged – so let’s hope WAC delivers – and fast. Meanwhile nice to see Azingo’s widget runtime using the JIL specification in action on the LiMo booth, as well as Nokia’s QT getting more traction.

Two sessions to watch for at the Open Mobile Summit London:

Day 2 Plenary Panel: Open where? Platforms v Networks

This gets to the heart of the power struggle around open-ness, and explores whether closed ecosystem / open platforms like the iPhone, Kindle and RIM models are the way forward, or whether operator backed web standards based initiatives will win in the long run.

We have some powerful characters lined-up for this critical discussion – watch this space.

The Web wins: Discuss

In the past we've run popular discussions on the topic of Apps in the Cloud vs Native apps. This time we're taking the conversation a stage further with a debate format. Is there life beyond the iPhone? Is there a mobile web beyond the App? And will the Web win, ultimately? And if so, what's the role of native apps in a cloud-centric world.

I'm also pleased to announce that both OMTP / BONDI and w3c are officially supporting the event this year – more partners to be announced soon.

*Open Mobile Summit London pre-launch offer sold out!

Those of you that know us well know we usually offer a 50% discount for a limited time at the period of launch. What you won't know is that usually only a handful of people take us up on it...because it's simply too early for most folks to commit. I restricted the offer to 50 this year and I'm delighted to say that we sold out on these half price tickets! So, the London conference community is coming together already.

If you're planning to attend, you can still save £400 if you register by April 14. Act now – click here to reserve your place now.
<http://www.openmobilesummit.com/lon/register/>

*Notes from Barcelona

- Nokia and Intel to merge Maemo and Moblin and create Meego. Great, one less 'open' platform to worry about. Q: What does this mean for Symbian?

- Coolest thing: The Power Mat. Put your phone (any phone) on it, anywhere, and it charges. Fantastic.

- Maddest thing: Eyeball navigation system for music player on the docomo stand. Let's hope that this doesn't take off...I dread to think what the world would look like if we were all twitching and eyeball rolling along the street whilst plugged into some AR surround experience. What's wrong with fingers and thumbs? Still, I had a good laugh watching the demo. Picture to come. P.S. I did like docomo's wooden phones though, very nice..

- Best story: Man found in lift at 8am one morning, fully suited, fully horizontal...presumed dead. Discovered very much alive but well lubricated having failed to make it back to his hotel room after a night out!

*Upcoming events

Open Mobile Summit '10 – May 26-27, London Venue Announced

The Open Mobile Summit London 2010 will take place at the Hilton Tower Bridge. I'm really excited about this venue – it's hip, uber comfortable and located in a really vibrant part of London. Easy to get to (London Bridge station) but yet outside of the cloistered suited and booted financial district. It's also going to be great for summer strolls alongside the river, with fabulous views of Tower Bridge, and close to some great restaurants, markets and nightlife.

*Partner event: Telco 2.0, 28-29 April

Our friends at STL Partners are holding the next Telco 2.0 event in London, this April 28-29. The Telco 2.0 events provide a deep dive into the evolution of both fixed and mobile operators business model, in the light of the changing dynamics of today's marketplace. Simon Torrance, Managing Partner of STL Partners and the founder of Telco 2.0 will also be speaking at the Open Mobile Summit in London, May 26-27, where he'll share some of the outputs of the recent discussion. You can find more information about STL's Telco 2.0 event here:
<http://www.telco2.net/event/>

*Open Mobile Summit. Closed Mobile Congress

OK so it's not free to attend, but the Open Mobile Summit is open to all, and enables an open dialogue between players large and small, VIPs and start-ups. That makes for some interesting conversations, cross pollination of ideas, and great networking.

As we build out the exhibition / marketplace element, we're working to sustain that.

It always strikes me as the antithesis of the MWC, where the doors are mainly closed, unless you've pre-arranged your meeting, and top execs are cloistered away in hospitality areas that more closely resemble fortresses than exhibition stands. It's a physical metaphor if you like for the defensive mobile value chain of the past.

We like to keep the conversation open.

(OK so the comparative is a little self serving, but hey, we're proud of what we're doing!)

*Open Mobile Summit London, May 26/27 - New keynotes announced!

Welcome to Alberto Torres, EVP Nokia, and Andrew Gilbert EVP Qualcomm, who are now both confirmed as the 4th and 5th keynotes for London '10. They join Kenneth Karlberg President Mobility at Telia Sonera, Olaf Swantee Senior Executive Vice President France Telecom and Olivier Baujard CTO Deutsche Telekom in the keynote line-up.

Over 50 other industry thought leaders have been confirmed to date - see www.openmobilesummit.com

We're closing the agenda this week, for launch next week - so watch this space!

All the best

Robin

Robin Batt

Founder and Managing Director
Open Mobile Media Ltd
+44 (0) 7968 006635

* Open Mobile Summit '10 London - May 26-27

* Open Mobile Summit '10 SF - Nov 2-4

www.openmobilemedia.com