



**iQ** "In Quotes"

*Mark Dye  
at the Mobile  
World Congress*



# Postcard from Barca

“

For a true understanding of just how big a beast mobile technology is these days, one need only take a casual stroll around the annual Mobile World Congress, as I did at this year's event in Barcelona recently. Eight halls packed with exhibitors, stands, freebies, and visitors (around 55,000 of them apparently) including Robert Redford, no less.

(In fact, it's an expo whose size, self confidence, and bravura seem to grow every year – which, as I see it, makes it pretty much the perfect microcosm of the industry it embodies.)

As I hopped, windswept and interesting, off the plane and made my way downtown, my first thought was that Samsung had taken over the place, such was the frequency of eye-catching adverts earnestly informing us all that the company had got 'Soul'; not apparently anything to do with James Brown, but a reference to an HSDPA-based touch-screen device of the same name upon which Samsung is pinning its hopes in 2008.

Other pre-show hype involved Apple and Google; the first having already grabbed third spot in the smartphone market with its iPhone, the latter entreating operators to get paranoid about its Android mobile Operating System. A number of manufacturers including NEC Electronics, Texas Instruments, and Qualcomm were showing off prototype Android handsets, with finished versions expected later this year.

Google says it's attempting to open up the market and make life easier for all parties (bless!) and heavyweight backers include T-Mobile, China Mobile, and Telefonica. Vodafone is having none of it however (for now at least), preferring to sit this play out until it knows more about the OS, according to CEO, Arun Sarin.

For its part, Nokia used the show to continue its assault on the services market; airing things like its Maps 2.0 application, which now caters for pedestrian as well as in-car navigation.

Mobile web use got a fair bit of attention too, with many predicting a decent user experience is at last on the way. "Finally, the handset is powerful enough to support the mobile Internet", sighed Masayoshi Son, CEO of Softbank. He suggested that future mobile networks will carry more data than voice traffic, and that voice could even be offered for free. "We're already doing this on the Softbank network in Japan", he added.

A lot of future content is likely to be user generated of course, and Social Networking (SN) was another recurring theme. Several companies were offering their take on the phenomena, including GyPSii, with its geo-location and SN platform, but it was Yahoo! that really caught my eye with its oneConnect software – an SN 'aggregator' for those of us addicted to Facebook, Myspace, Bebo, Twitter, LinkedIn and the like.

The service brings all these together, allowing users to interact via SMS, IM, email, and phone, and to switch between their PCs and mobiles via one application. Better still, oneConnect isn't tied to Yahoo's own services, so you can also retrieve messages via AOL, Gmail and MSN. It would have been mighty handy for me while I was in Barca as it happens.

Editors, eh. Who'd have 'em?

”