


mmSUMMIT 2010

MOBILEMONDAY® HELSINKI-TALLINN 27.-29. SEPTEMBER

MOBILE MONDAY

Starting out over a few pints of Guinness in an Irish pub in Helsinki at the turn of the millennium, Mobile Monday has since grown into an international movement with a dynamic tribal presence. NEIL SIMPSON finds out more.

MOBILE MONDAY (also fondly known as MoMo) is an international community of mobile professionals and enthusiasts aiming to meet in cities around the world one Monday a month. Vesa-Matti 'Vesku' Paananen organised the first gathering in September 2000 at an Irish pub in Helsinki, with 57 'mobilists' turning up. Before long gatherings started happening at various mobile events around the world in cities including Singapore, Cape Town, Beijing and Cannes. In 2010, MoMo has 150,000 members covering 102 chapters in 50 countries, with meetings largely organised by volunteers.

Did Microsoft consultant Paananen expect MoMo to grow like it did? "Yes," he says, without hesitating. "The success went beyond what I expected in my mind, but didn't surprise my heart. Tribes are very strong and global. They tend to survive. I was and still am a strong believer in tribes. People want to network and there should be neutral parties that can enable a platform for innovations and debates. There was a social need for MoMo. The first MoMo in Helsinki was just a gathering of different kinds of active people that shared a common interest in mobility. The agenda was simple – short presentations from different kinds of companies that give one food for thought and generate discussion. I also wanted to provide a forum for start-ups to give and practise their pitches."

So what was the mobile industry like back in 2000? "It was about devices (aka phones)," Paananen says. "The service industry was

picking up – we had ringtones, logos etc and black and white screens. Data services started to exist and the whole industry was struggling in the WAP bubble. There was a lot of room for innovation, but the platform wasn't ready for advanced value-added services. Operators had more walled gardens than today."

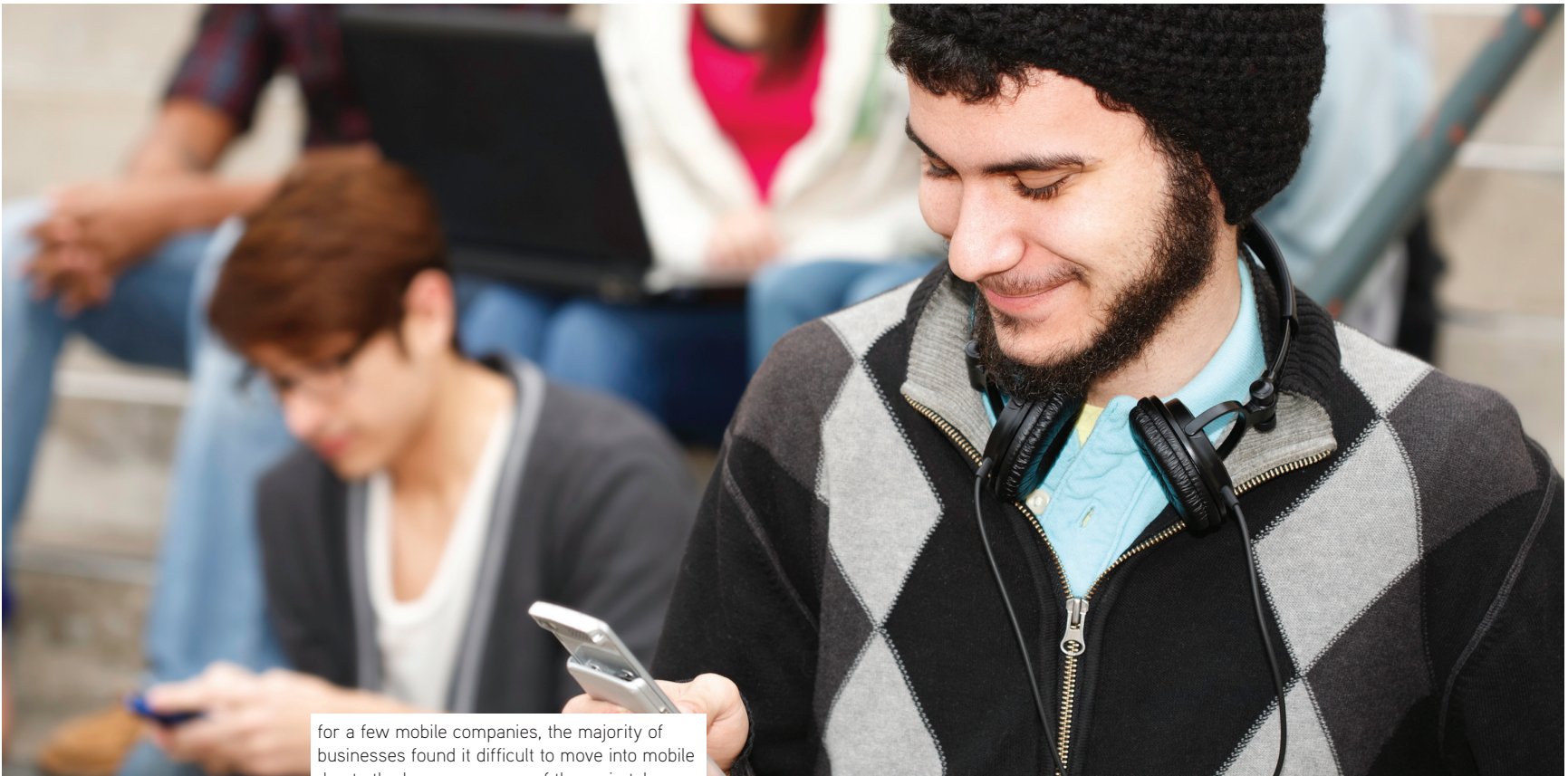
So, moving on to the present time, what digital trends does Paananen think we can look forward to? "Naturally applications are hot, but they are just one user interface that provides a user experience. I have said many times that content is king, but service is King Kong. Today a service is all about user experience and especially integrated experiences... [for example] the Cloud integrates to different screens and we can consume services with different kind of devices. The three big ones are PC, mobile and TV. The Cloud provides a scalable and reasonably cheap platform to build services. That's good for start-ups and users will expect to be able to consume services everywhere."

"We are in a situation where technology enables, for example, a game that can be played with Xbox on TV and then a player continues a mobile 'extension' with their phone," Paananen continues. "I'm not talking about 'porting' a game from Xbox to mobile, but an extension of a game where you have to do something with your phone to unlock new features with achievements, or proceed with the game in Xbox or PC. It's cool that game developers, for example, can use same XNA codebase and run it easily in all three screens."

On the subject of convergence Jo Rabin, one of the MoMo London organisers, suggests that the web seems to offer a route to technology convergence. "After all consumers probably don't care too much about how their applications are built and web applications are just as valid as any other technique," says Rabin. "What this doesn't address is the need for different user experiences on the various types of platform – effective exploitation of the affordances of the various devices, and deploying a native look and feel is going to be important. A number of toolkits that address the technology incompatibilities are starting to emerge, which is encouraging. What I am not seeing at the moment is a way of recognising the differences in user experience that are necessary across platforms, while helping designers avoid starting from scratch with each one."

At this point it's time to spin the globe and find out about MoMo's presence in Australia. With chapters in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and the possibility of one in Perth, MoMo has given digital professionals in Australia the chance to grab a beer after work and talk about the world of mobile.

MoMo's Sydney chapter was started in September 2006 and is run by Shane Williamson, Tim Parsons and Oliver Weidlich. It now has over 1600 people on its mailing list, with an average turnout of 100. "The mobile industry in Australia has always been under the shadow of the main telcos. While this was good



for a few mobile companies, the majority of businesses found it difficult to move into mobile due to the heavy presence of the main telcos and the necessity to work under their terms. We started with the premise to assist local people and companies in Sydney by creating an event that promoted networking and access to experienced people from the industry," Williamson says of MoMo Sydney's beginnings.

What does Weidlich think are the major hurdles in the global mobile industry that need be overcome in order to give mobile users the best possible experiences? "I think we're going through a very exciting time at the moment where lots of platforms are really starting to take shape," he says. "And with this people are starting to realise what a good advanced mobile experience can be like, largely led by the iPhone. The better user experiences they have, the more they use their mobile and the more integrated they become in people's lives. The biggest hurdle is still creating mobile products and services that are that great combination of being useful, easy to use and engaging. Of course old business thinking is also a big dampener on industry. Most businesses still don't really understand mobile user experience."

What about new trends emerging specifically in the Australian market? "The biggest trend in Australia is the adoption of the smartphone and the developer ecosystem forming around these devices," says Williamson. "The smartphone brings computer like functionality to the mobile and extends functionality for both personal and business use. The local mobile developer community has released some great applications for mobile and there are some impressive development companies that are forging their way on the local and international markets such as Mogeneration, Foot Front and Firemint.

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- Where is MoMo?**
 Here are a few MoMo locations:
- Bucharest
 - Boulder
 - Calgary
 - Cape Town
 - Johannesburg
 - Malmö
 - Malta
 - Medellin
 - Mexico City
 - Miami
 - Oulu
 - Philadelphia
 - Portland
 - Riga
 - Rio de Janeiro
 - Slovenia
 - Sofia
 - Vienna
 - Alger
 - Brooklyn
 - Colombo
 - Columbus
 - Islamabad
 - Kampala
 - Nairobi
 - Orlando
 - Pasadena
 - Tampa

"Another interesting trend is that around the Mobile Internet Device (MID) such as the Apple iPad and other Android tablet devices," Williamson continues. "The MID is a powerful collaboration tool that will fill a gap between the desktop and mobile working environments. While this technology has been around for some time, it is only recently that the software and the technology have reached a critical point in making the user experience a positive one."

MoMo celebrates 10 years at the Anniversary Summit and Peer Awards in September 2010. This event will celebrate MoMo's history and success, and bring the global MoMo network to Helsinki and Tallinn for three days of networking, sharing ideas and information.

If you are into mobile, but can't get to Helsinki, check out the links below for the next Australian MoMo meeting near you. **DT**

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- USEFUL LINKS**
- www.mobilemonday.com
 - www.mobilemondaysydney.com
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