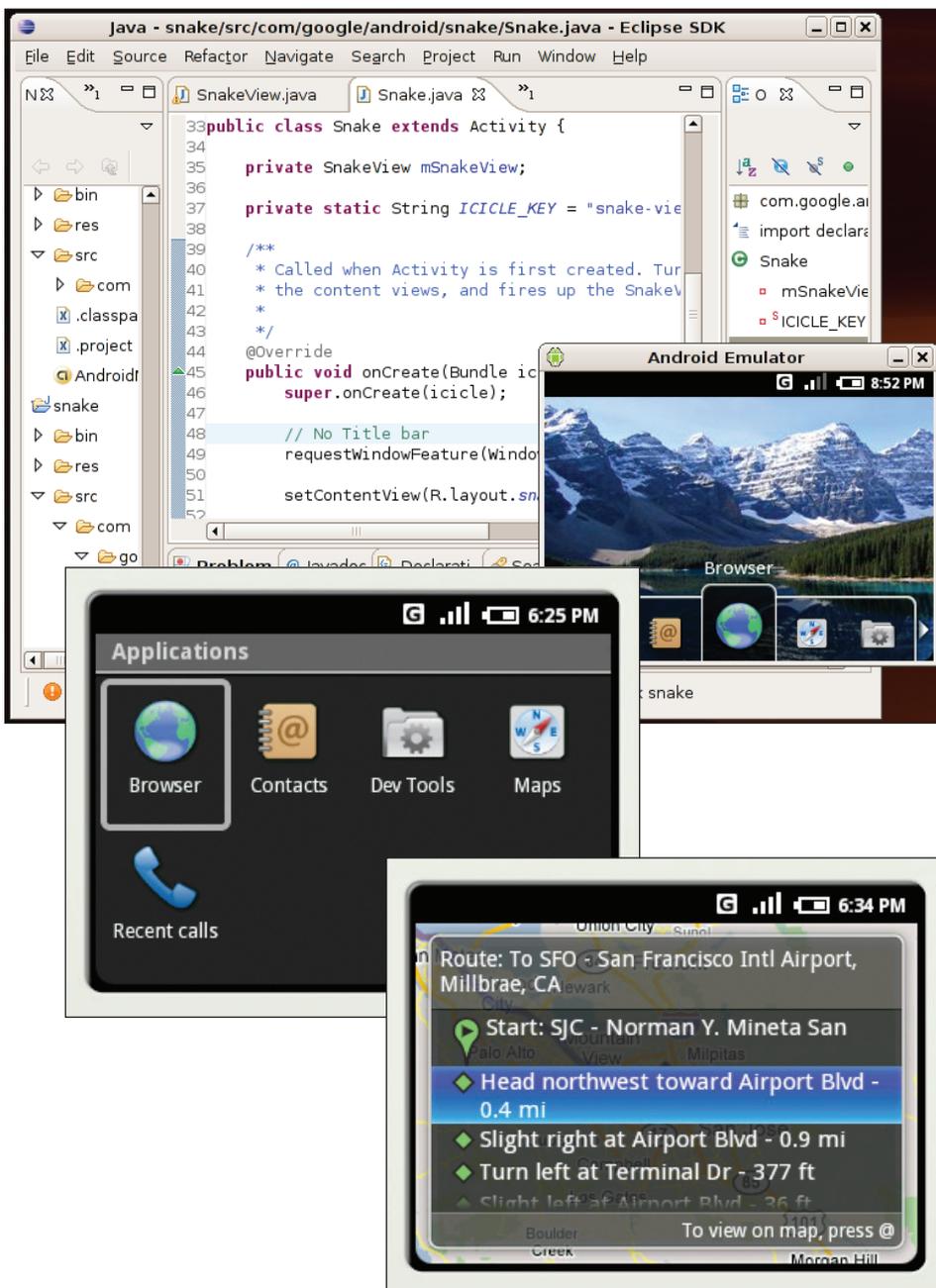


# ANDROID

## Google's answer to mobile



On the face of it there's not much to interest publishers about a new mobile phone operating system (OS) – after all, few users would be able to tell you what OS they have on their phone. So why should you care about Android? The 'G-word,' that's why; because nobody can afford to ignore it when Google gets behind a move to open up the mobile market.

If the hype is to be believed, then the true launch of the 'G-phone' later this year – the first prototypes were shown at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on 11 February – will revolutionise the way phones work. You will be able to shoot videos, edit and upload them to your YouTube account, and watch YouTube videos as well. If you lose your way while driving, you can tell your phone where you want to go and it will direct you. If you wish to reach out to a friend, all you will need to do is touch the friend's name in your contact list and your phone will contact them via voice, e-mail or a text message, depending on where they are. That's on top of running the full suite of Google's fast breeding family of online applications from Gmail to Picasa

by way of Google maps. In fact, while Google's name steals the headlines, the Android project is the result of a partnership of the 34 technology and mobile companies of the Open Handset Alliance. The Alliance's goal is to bring a Linux-like open source approach to the mobile phone – and with it upset the current leadership lineup in mobile.

## What is it?

Android consists of three components; a Linux-based operating system to rival the likes of Symbian or Windows Mobile, a middleware environment to run the resource management tools, and the applications themselves. Most of the interest in Android revolves around the promise of these applications. Open source developers have driven much of the most innovative programming on the web and it's hoped that Android will successfully translate that to the mobile. Developers for the open source platform don't have to pay licences to proprietary systems and retain the intellectual property to their applications – an approach that has proved appealing to smaller, creative developers. In case that doesn't prove incentive enough, Google has also offered a US\$ 10 million award scheme to encourage Android developers.

## So what can it do?

"This is potentially a big deal in that it would allow someone to create, for instance, a classified advertising application that sucks updated data down to the web, has a complete advertising stack [a suite of advertising products delivered by their software] on the device and could allow one-touch between buyers and sellers," says Robert Cauthorn, CEO, City-Tools LLC. "When you have direct access to the web and to the phone, the potential for media companies could be huge."

"Location-based services can especially be easier implemented," says Wolfgang Nedomansky, managing director, MINDS International. "New services prices for handsets can be lowered, as no licence



**Wolfgang Nedomansky,**  
**managing director, MINDS International**

*"In the long run Google aims to conquer the mobile advertising market by transferring its basic business concept into a mobile environment. This could negatively affect current business of media, as Google will grab additional advertising revenues. If Android becomes a success, Google's market power will further rise and this is a threat for media companies in general."*

cost for an operating system has to be paid. The integration of a web browser should push the use of mobile Internet. I expect lots of new applications, thanks to the Android Developer Challenge. Allowing easy access to data on mobile devices in a new way could reveal synergy effects that have never been seen before. The wisdom of crowds combined with openness can lead to successful projects such as Linux, Wikipedia and other open source and crowd-led projects."

Which is not to say that Android is a sure-fire winner, even with the backing of Google. "One decisive question for the success of Android will be community acceptance," notes Nedomansky.

Cauthorn, too, has reservations: "It would be a mistake to think that just because Google is involved, it means Android will be a major player. There is a lot of work they need to do. Yes, Android could be a major event; it could also be completely forgotten a year from now."

## The other OS players

One of the key reasons for uncertainty over the future is that even Google can't crack the mobile market on its own. The announcement of Android is certainly another example of Google's surefooted feeling for the market since there is frus-

tration over the amount of innovation coming from Windows Mobile and Symbian – something demonstrated by the fuss lavished on Apple's iPhone.

"Symbian has all but stopped innovating," confirms Cauthorn. "Its goals are completely tied to the competitive goals of its main sponsors. That has utterly stifled creativity. Windows Mobile needs a big shot to get moving. The innovations of the iPhone demonstrate clearly what happens when someone new arrives on the scene and says, 'What about doing it this way?' Microsoft and Nokia have had five years head start but they have done so little true innovation. Adding a contacts list to the phone isn't innovation."

In the end, the handset companies still hold a big key to market entry. Josefine Granding Larsson, managing director, Broaden Community AB in Sweden, a developer of mobile communities, points out that: "The difference [between

## In a nutshell

### What is Android?

Google's new mobile operating publishing platform based on open source development.

### Hope or hype?

With Google behind it and competitors, like Microsoft and Symbian, not completely established in mobile, it could be attractive like the iPhone is.

### Media threat or opportunity?

Gives media another platform to deliver content and reach more customers, but in the long run Google could garner sought-after mobile ad market.

### Key to market acceptance

How handset companies incorporate it.

### Market release

Expected to be launched this summer.



**Sergey Brin,  
President  
Technology,  
Google**

*"The software is free, source is completely available, and we*

*expect great new applications to be developed on it. The best applications are not here yet. They are going to be written by developers, applications that are innovative and make use of the great functionality of the Android platform. We'd like to reward developers and recognise them as much as possible."*

Android and Symbian or Windows Mobile] is that Android is open and free so that anyone can develop applications for it. But Android still has to be incorporated in the user's mobile device, and it is up to the device manufacturer to do it."

Nokia wasn't showing Android on prototype devices at the Barcelona trade show, it was a handful of chip makers. But Nokia did announce that it would incorporate Google's search engine into its devices. This is an interesting move because Android is in reality a direct rival to Nokia's S60 platform, so Nokia keeps its options open for the future.

But Nedomansky of MINDS says he believes that because Android comes



**Kiruba Shankar,  
CEO, Business  
Blogging Pvt.  
Ltd., India**

*"When there was talk about Google coming out with an e-mail service, many sceptics said that Google was late by at least seven years. (Yet) Google produced a very user-friendly service that is superior to other e-mailing systems. Android could be the Gmail in mobile platforms."*

**Steve Ballmer, CEO, Microsoft**

*"Windows Mobile commands a large share of the North American market. It is available across 150 different handsets, and over 100 mobile operators around the world. We would probably license 20 million Windows Mobile devices this year, at least quite dramatic amongst platform systems. We've brought Windows Mobile sixth software into the market, driving forward our future releases. We have to see what Google does. They are welcome to our world."*

**Nigel Clifford, CEO, Symbian**

*"Android is just another Linux platform. Google will have to compete inside the Symbian customer base for those products that came out using Symbian operating systems."*

without the licensing fees of Microsoft and Symbian, it "could lower entry barriers to the mobile software market. Nonetheless, a few big players lead the market for smart phones and it will take some time, effort and money to reach a critical mass for every new market participant. Developing a reliable mobile operating system, which can be used and distributed by handheld manufacturers is definitely not a trivial task."

## Android and media

Will Android change the media landscape? The quick answer is that without a product yet in the market it is too early to tell, and much of Android's promise lies in other players hands. "Over time, as Android develops, it could end up delivering valuable things to the open source community, things that can be used to change the media landscape," says Cauthorn. "What really matters in this space right now are the iPhone and the Amazon Kindle because they speak directly to the potential for mobile media in a meaningful way. If you want a taste of the future and if you want to see what matters to media, you look at the iPhone and the Kindle [from Amazon]."

The real mouthwatering promise of Android is that it might pry some of the control away from the established players

and in the process open up better opportunities for content providers and advertisers alike. Given Google's track record, however, there are those who question whether media companies really stand to gain from such a shift of power.

"Media will get an additional platform and therefore more potential customers with Android," Nedomansky says. "This new technology could result in higher usability, as there will be more possibilities of integration and better display of content. In the long run, Google aims to conquer the mobile advertising market by transferring its basic business concept into a mobile environment. This could negatively affect current business of media, as Google will grab additional advertising revenues. If Android becomes a success, Google's market power will further rise and this is a threat for media companies in general."

According to Hubertus Koehler, chief technical officer, dpa-infocom GmbH, demonstrations of Android suggest a better user experience on the mobile device, comparable with Apple's iPhone. In combination with declining data tariffs and the introduction of flat rates, this could enhance Internet usage by mobile users as seen with Apple's iPhone. "Because Android will probably be marketed primarily to consumers, it could significantly enhance usage of mobile services provided by the media industry," he says.

“What Google will ultimately provide is a link to content,” says Al Bonner, advertising and marketing director, Journal-World in Lawrence, Kansas. “If your content is better, more relevant and more local than the information offered by other sites, then the phone can become another platform to bring users to your sites. However, this assumes that newspapers are already taking advantage of the delivery-on-request technologies that are already available for cell phones like text messages, mobile editions, or even computer-generated voice messages. Many aren’t, at least in the United States.”

The bottom line here is whether the Android development can usher in a shift in the model of mobile advertising. The consensus here is that Android will “come to life,” but to what degree is uncertain.

Sashi Nair ([sashi@ifra.com](mailto:sashi@ifra.com)) coordinated this report, and Dean Roper and Steve Shipside contributed.

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# Android mobile platform – great, but who cares?



**Stig Nordqvist**  
Director Business Development, IFRA

When Google launched the mobile – which was not a mobile but an operating system – I felt a big “Who cares?” After the long-awaited Apple iPhone, which exceeded at least my expectations, sizzling rumours about Google’s move into mobile left many wondering what the search giant might unveil.

What appeared, along existing mobile platforms from Apple, Nokia, Symbian and Microsoft, was Google Android. And quite frankly – what difference does it make, as long as we in the publishing industry can easily push mobile services and news to the various mobile platforms?

So, after feeling a bit uncertain about what to think about Android – one part of me being enthusiastic and one part just wondering why launch Android and not just offer better tools for and on existing mobile platforms – I decided to ask some mobile guru friends whether they feel as I do.

For me and for most web users, Google has been instrumental in the Internet revolution over the past decade. It’s therefore not surprising that they want a piece of the growing mobile Internet. As Lawrence Cosh-lshii at [wirelesswatch.jp](http://wirelesswatch.jp) says, “I’d say that one of the stronger points about the Android platform is the potential for tapping into Google’s suite of plug-in tools, search, location, payments, ads, etc. for developers to write apps around existing services.”

But I wonder, do mobile users need a new platform? It will be very hard to compete with Symbian and Microsoft, which are growing fast in the mobile field. So far, what has impressed me the most in the platform war is iPhone’s speed and incredible user interface,

which surpassed by far any of the others – it’s a pity it is burdened by the subscription plan of AT&T and others.

In the mobile world, the so-called “initial frame” is important, and this is traditionally owned by the mobile operator. Until now it’s been a big problem for publishers to be visible and to get any significant revenues. So if Google succeeds in bringing their platform to the market, it will supply the initial frame, and we will surely provide the many free applications that we already use on the web. There will also be Google ads in combination with location-based services, etc. This will be a threat for some and a business opportunity for others.

We should turn to Japan, where mobile business has been strong for years, but where we now see a change with increasingly stiff competition.

Atsushi Sato at Asahi newspaper tells me: “Of course, Google services are based upon free content. Content providers like us will be at a disadvantage. We should recognise that Android might be a new threat for us in the content business on the mobile phone.”

Then why would you care as a publisher? Well, primarily if you already use a lot of Google tools on your web sites or to support your business, it is interesting to tap into the mobile community. Sharon Knitter, who formerly worked for Tribune and is now at cars.com, says: “I think Android is interesting and will make more things possible. However, for me as a content provider, I’ve tried to stay agnostic to any of the platforms. It is my job to make sure that I offer content that is optimised for all devices.”

And I agree.