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Symbian Expo – The Smartphone Show – Final Report

Written by [Richard Bloor](#)
 Friday, 08 October 2004



The range of products at this years Symbian Expo was significantly greater than the last show 18 months ago. In this third Show report we take a whistle stop tour round some of the other products and services on show.

By 2009 Symbian predicts that the number of phones shipped which could benefit from using Symbian OS (phone in which the components and their cost essentially mean the device is a smartphone) will be in the region of two hundred million units. This scale of smartphone devices will provide the operators with significant new challenges, complex devices whose complexity will be increased by the range of software and services which they can run. This will result in an increasing number of support calls with the danger is that smartphone support costs could outweigh revenue benefits. A number of vendors have recognized this and several products which address support issues where at the show.

Today loading the most up to date version of a phones firmware or an application is an inconvenience to the user. [Red Bend](#) is one company addressing this problem with a system to update firmware and software over the air. The technology makes OTA updates realistic by firstly creating update packages which contain only the changes to the software, which keeps the size of the download to a minimum. Then the phone resident update application has been designed to minimize the amount of swap memory required to complete the update to ensure the update can be achieved given the limited memory on smartphone devices. At the show [Read Bend](#) demonstrated the system with an update to IQ Instant Messenger, using update file which was about a tenth the size of the complete application and took less then a minute to complete.

[mformation](#) are also addressing the OTA update problem, but its system also addresses a wide range of other support problems providing performance and availability monitoring, smartphone diagnostics and configuration management. The increased use of smartphones, particularly in the enterprise means that sensitive data is becoming more venerable, mformation provides protection for this data with devices lockout capabilities, as long a SIM card is in the phone and it is connected to the network it continues to communicate with the mformation server via either packet data or SMS allowing locks to be applied even of a stolen phone is connecting with a different air time package.



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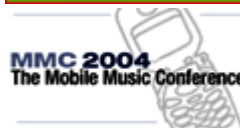
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While Read Bend and mformation deal with the concrete support issues a system from ResponseTek has been designed to addressing the soft customer satisfaction domain. The ResponseTek system places feedback questionnaires on a smartphone providing the operator with a mechanism to gather customer satisfaction information directly at the point the user is interaction with its service, on their phone. More importantly the system allows feedback to be gathered in real time, what this practically means is that if the user has just completed a call to the service center they are immediately presented with a satisfaction survey, where for example they could register the fact that they had to hold for 20 minutes before their call was answered. This information is then sent directly to ResponseTek's system where the managers responsible for call center services can immediately see the feedback. Much of the smarts in ResponseTek's system is in the backend, allowing feedback to be managed and reported. One interesting aspect of the feedback ResponseTek's system has enables, in internet implementations, is that, despite the expectation that the overwhelming volume of feedback would be negative, in fact satisfied customer are equally likely to provide a response.

Elsewhere in the show Brother's diminutive m-print A7 thermal printer caught our eye and clearly offers a whole new dimension in mobile printing. It was on display on the ThinPrint stand and works with ThinPrint's content beamer technology. Unfortunately this devices will probably not work with HP's mobile printing application, as HP's solution currently connects via Bluetooth, although USB support is in development (m-print connects via infrared or USB) but we suspect that even when the connectivity is compatible the print drivers will not be. HP's focus for its mobile printing is very much on imaging, and David Cobleigh, product manager for mobile printing solutions, was refreshingly honest in admitting that the reason for this was that image printing drives the sales of ink cartridges.

We mentioned the Arima U300 in our day one report and from a brief hands on the phone is an impressive implementation of the UIQ interface. Elsewhere Nokia had the 9500 Communicator and 9300 Super Smartphone on display, despite our initial reaction to the 9300 it was probably the more impressive of the two as its form factor and application capabilities seems to offer a new dimension in mobile working.

Continuing the theme of professional and enterprise uses Polycom were demonstrating its conference calling system. Although the system is implemented on a wide range of devices James Brennan, product / business development manager for Polycom's Wireless Group believes the UI on Symbian phones has allowed Polycom to create the most natural "phoning" experience for the product. A wide range of synchronization systems were also on display. These included Intellisync who is now also addressing a wider consumer audience. The key selling point for Intellisync's consumer solution is that unlike Blackberry it is a white label product allowing operators to uniquely brand their wireless mail offering.

There were also a number of "hidden" products at the show, companies present but not exhibiting. Christopher Reiner and Jan Pantzar from Voice Signal for example were at the show. Voice Signals technology powers the voice recognition on the Sendo X. We managed to catch up with them and got a demonstration of the next version of there speaker independent voice dial system which now is capable of responding to complete commands. So unlike the current solution, where the commands are entered as a series of prompts and responses it is now possible to "Dial John Smith Mobile."

If there was one thing which differentiated the this years Symbian Expo



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from previous events it was diversity. Diversity both in the number of exhibitors but also in the range of solutions, both back and front end, on display. Two days did not seem like long enough to take it all in and we certainly ended up coming away from the show with a list of exhibitors and technologies worthy of further investigation and coverage. We shall be returning to them with our usual in-depth coverage over the next week and month. One thing is certain, we are looking forward to next year.

Finally we would like to express our thanks to PR team at Symbian, Anatolie Papas, Laura Sykes and Valerie Breslow as well as Joanna Butler and the events team for their assistance both before and at the event. Also to all the exhibitors who found time to talk with us.

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