

## Mobile Content Matters Sept 17 2008

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[According to the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association \(CWTA\)](#), there are currently over 20.5 million Canadian wireless subscribers. As marketers, our objective is to reach them. There are [many ways in which to do this](#), of course. But increasingly these require not only the presence of a mobile device, but the presence of mobile content.



This is content in which consumers are showing increased interest with every year that passes. [According to Statistics Canada](#), the operating revenue per mobile phone subscriber increased from \$177 in Q4 2005 to \$190 in Q4 2006. This seems to indicate that consumers are now relying on their phones for far more than making calls. They're modifying the way in which they utilize their devices, and the way in which they consume media overall.

Despite the interest from consumers (or more accurately, because of it), there are questions as to the best way to format and deliver mobile content. How should it be presented to account for the smaller screens on which it's viewed? How, if at all, should it differ from the HTML content used online?

One solution that has been explored is stripping formatted content of the technology that isn't typically supported by handheld devices, such as Java and Macromedia Flash, and delivering a pared-down version of what consumers would otherwise get on the Web. Publishers have also tried sending their entire Web sites to phones, again with inappropriate content removed to ensure a more user-friendly mobile device experience. This can cause bandwidth problems, says Don Lay, president and CEO of [Contec Innovations](#), a mobile service provider headquartered in Vancouver. But there's a bigger issue at hand.

### What Consumers Want

"What you want to do on a phone is (fundamentally) different from what you want to do on the Web," Lay says. Handheld users want news, sports, weather, and financial information. They also want content that goes beyond the typical wallpaper and ring



tones commonly associated with mobile use.

To provide this, Contec launched BUZMob Mobile Media Network, a beta service introduced last year to facilitate the publishing of licensed, syndicated, and user-generated content for mobile devices. Now, Contec has licensing agreements with major content providers to offer a turnkey content delivery service to mobile operators that can be

passed along to their subscribers.

Contec is primarily focused on emerging markets like South Africa, where the mobile penetration rate is over 80 per cent (and Internet penetration is less than 10), and so represents an ideal partner for Canadian businesses eager to target international markets. Those looking to reach consumers closer to home will be interested to learn about recent content deals like that struck between [Quattro Wireless](#) and CBC/Radio Canada. The U.S.-based mobile content provider [recently announced](#) that it would be developing a series of ad-supported mobile sites that offer access to current CBC and Radio Canada news, sports, and entertainment content. Advertisers will be able to target local and national audiences through the sites.

#### Who Controls the Content?

When it comes to determining how and where mobile content is being made available, one can't overlook the recent talk to our south of a shift away from service providers, who have delivered much of the mobile content previously consumed by mobile users. [According to one analyst](#), about 80 per cent of content for U.S. mobile phones is currently being purchased from carrier Web portals, like those operated by Verizon Wireless, AT&T and Sprint Nextel. Within five years, these sources will account for only 25 per cent of all content purchased. The prediction is that mobile phone manufacturers and retailers will gain a greater share of the mobile content market, for example by selling devices that come with content subscriptions.

On our side of the border, the U.S. is still playing a major role in mobile content delivery. Just this month, American provider PlayPhone was granted permission by the CWTA to deliver direct-to-consumer mobile content to Canadian subscribers. Through [playphone.ca](#), mobile users will be able to access games, ringtones, videos, and more. Marketing opportunities exist through content distribution partnerships, like those the company currently enjoys with SONY, EMI Group, Cartoon Network, SEGA, Disney, and ABC Television.

#### WAP and The Future of Mobile Content

Some say the solution to mobile content lies with Wireless Application Protocol, or WAP. This data transfer protocol is made for the limitations associated with mobile phones, including low data transfer speeds and a small display screen. It's mobile's answer to Web-based HTML, and it's proving useful for publishers like Facebook, which offers a [WAP site](#) that contains a selection of the tools available on its HTML site offered in a user-friendly mobile format.



Many WAP sites offer advertising, although this remains uncharted territory for most publishers. Opportunities can come in the form of banners, text links, and ad-supported games, not unlike the options available to marketers online--just in a miniature format. But just as publishers struggle to determine the best way to format their content for phones, advertisers face a challenge in connecting with potential customers within this new space.

As we explore our options, we must keep in mind that, indeed, the way in which consumers use their phones and the content they seek can vary greatly from the Web. Understanding their mindset will be critical to knowing what type of content--and associated advertising--will matter to them.

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