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## Mobile, Mostyle

NEW MEDIA | by David Kearney

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When asked to name the handful of countries leading the world in mobile technology and content, most people fire back with Japan, South Korea, perhaps even the United States. However, there is a largely unheralded country pushing mobile content into new, uncharted territories: Australia.

The challenge for Australian mobile content production companies is that, even though Australian mobile technology is world-class, its users are not early adopters of new software. This might be due to a lack of relevant content or perhaps a more general issue of culture. Whatever the reason, while our thriving internet industry is getting exposure through massive successes like Hitwise and wotif.com, Australian mobile content production companies are relatively unknown in the global tech industry.

To get an insider's view on the steadily yet stealthily growing Australian mobile phone content industry, I sat down with Alex Young, CEO and founder of Mostyle.

"What makes the mobile content industry unique is the massively varying adoption speeds and interest in mobile content throughout the world," says Young. "Japan, along with most other prominent Asian countries, is lapping up the exorbitant amount of content being produced in their homeland, as well as India. What sets these countries apart from the USA and the leading European countries is that while these western countries are also displaying interest in mobile content, their technology cannot cater for top quality software."

Which brings us to Australia. According to Young, Australia is actually one of the world leaders in mobile technology and this is a driving reason behind the excellent content that is being produced here. It's just that Australian mobile users pay relatively scant attention to the content available, making the market far less attractive than those of our nearby Asian counterparts.

Put simply, Mostyle aims to improve the mobile phone experience. By using Australia as Mostyle's testbed, Young is aiming to educate more Australians about the exciting mobile content that is available. Mostyle is the culmination of Young's experience working in countries and companies that have been at the forefront of mobile content's steady evolution. He has worked for Nokia, Telstra (during the i-mode and 3G launches) and Starhub (in Singapore for the i-mode launch).

Mostyle combines a community feature similar to online social network giants such as Facebook and MySpace, and a publishing feature that allows users to create their own mobile pages within the Mostyle environment. These are not entirely new concepts, but what sets Mostyle apart from similar software is its ability to be used on almost any handset through any provider. It is also the first to combine the publishing and social network functions within one easy-access package.

A little-known fact about mobile phone technology is that mobile "back-ends" vary greatly from handset to handset. It's not as simple as designing a program that will work on any Nokia, then transferring it so it will work on a handset built by Ericsson, LG, Samsung, etc. Not only do different companies use different operating systems, there is also the issue of large differences in capability between a high-end multimedia phone and a standard handset. This means programmers literally have to design the program then go from handset to handset checking that it works and ironing out any bugs specific to the phone. "We have a huge amount of handsets and we literally put in a sim card, test the software, check for problems or bugs, take out the sim card and move to the next phone," says Young. "It's a key strength when it comes to maintaining user experience quality across all 3G handsets."

Mostyle has been beta testing its service for the best part of the past year and tweaking the program based on the huge amount of feedback received. As a result, as Mostyle is rolled out in February/March this year it can be adopted by the masses and not confined to limited networks and certain types of handsets.

Another advantage Mostyle holds over its current competition is that it was designed from the outset with international markets in mind. Young has worked in Japan and Hong Kong and is well aware of the importance of these mobile markets. Accordingly, the software has been designed to support Asian languages.

"We have been testing Mostyle in several Asian countries to make sure it is ready to go. We always set out with an international market in mind because, obviously, we want an international mobile community. Plus, this is where the largest mobile activity or 3G mobile take-up is."

While there is no doubt competitors will always be close behind, early innovators have an important advantage in new media sectors. By being the first easily accessible and highly functional mobile community and publishing platform, Mostyle has placed itself in prime position to be ahead of the pack.



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Young is currently in talks with a number of major telecommunication providers. So get used to the name – Mostyle – coming soon to a mobile near you.

Check out Mostyle at [www.mostyle.mobi](http://www.mostyle.mobi)

*David Kearney is Anthill's Special Projects Manager.  
Paul Ryan is on leave.*

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