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Mostyle - Mobile + Lifestyle

Vishal Sharma  Monday, July 21, 2008 [Australia](#) , [Entrepreneur](#) , [Innovation](#) , [Interview](#) , [Media](#) , [Mobile](#) , [New](#) , [Service](#) , [Startup](#) , [Technology](#) , [Tools](#)

Today we showcase an exciting and a successful venture founded by, Alex in 2006 from Melbourne, Australia, **Mostyle!** - comes from "Mobile" + "Lifestyle" - a telco-independent mobile ecosystem that not only provides the tools to build a mobile site but offers the distribution, community and multiple enablers for the monetising of mobile content through advertising or micropayments.




In a recent email based interview with Alex, he gave insights into his venture and how he is progressing with it. This is what he has to say:

- Please tell us about yourself, your background and interests?
I have a Computer Science degree from RMIT University and am nearly done with a Masters of Entrepreneurship & Innovation from Swinburne University. Over the past 10 years I've been working in different areas of mobile gaming and entertainment, dealing with content, portals, industry building and development. My range of professional experiences has mainly been with Nokia (Mobile Entertainment Platform), Telstra (i-mode launch, 3G launch), StarHub (i-mode launch) and Hong Kong Polytechnic's Multimedia Innovation Centre. I love the mobile space!
I'm also an avid gamer and we still enjoy some Warcraft 3 games in the office while my home gaming has mainly been CounterStrike Source, the Rainbow 6 Series and also Crysis. I'm also a long time Comic/Graphic Novel reader (and I've just been busy rebuilding my collection thanks to Ebay).

I live in Melbourne but have also spent a fair amount of time around in Hong Kong (No.1 destination), Tokyo (No.2 destination) and recently Singapore (No.3 destination). It's important to keep abreast of shifts in the mobile industry regionally and also to be on top of the latest fashion trends.

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- Please tell us about your venture/company?

At Mostyle we have a vision of a telco-independent mobile ecosystem that not only provides the tools to build a mobile site but offers the distribution, community and multiple enablers for the monetising of mobile content through advertising or micropayments. Right now we are live with the fundamental tools for this vision which include a web2.0 mobile site builder tool, central portal and integrated mobile community. Our enterprise services allow for 3rd parties to utilize our mobile site builder and also for branded communities while we also do some Mobile Site Production Services.

What makes us quite unique is that we have the integration between all these elements that sit above a very strong technology platform comprising of our proprietary solution to handle the best user experience across all mobile devices.

- Who are the people behind this and how it started?

Started by me circa 2003 originally as a website to share findings, research and street intelligence on how youth across APAC (Australia vs. Hong Kong vs. Japan) adopt mobile phones into their lifestyle. While the nuances of how mobility impacts society is well studied now in those days there was a lot of interesting trends and behaviour to report on. During this time, while living in Japan, I had the chance to do a lot of networking and mixing with the local mobile game developers and others throughout the mobile scene. I returned to Australia shortly after to take advantage of some of the future mobile market and mobile technology opportunities that I could see coming. And so the birth of the concept of a regional (if not global) distribution platform began.

- How long it took before it was up and running?

It was probably a year before we officially registered the company but we had already begun building our first product called Pocket Charlie. Over the years we built a number of products catering to the youth market which ultimately assisted us with solving some key mobile technology issues that have since been built into the Mostyle Platform. The products leading up to the platform were Pocket Charlie in 2004 (a mobile game buy-before-you-try web/mobile portal, Pocket Charlie 3G in 2005 (a lifestyle 3G portal which had media sharing and message board support) and Pocket Charlie World 2006 (our very sexy 3G community portal).

- What is the main objective/mission behind your venture?

To populate the global mobile internet with high quality sites filled with fun content and entertainment for all! We're really just here to make it a reality sooner.

- What services it provides it for consumer or customers?

In terms of consumer services we offer free access to the mobile site builder and also free mobile profiles for all. Basically this is an entry point to interact with the community elements of Mostyle and to communicate or find new friends. We have a number of enterprise services as well allowing for others to rebrand our mobile site builder and branded mobile community elements. Additional exciting services for content providers will be launched soon as well.

- What type of customers you are targeting?

Everyone needs a mobile site these days; some people even need thousands of them. On an enterprise level we're targeting a range of customers who have these needs including

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Ad-network providers, ISP's, directory services, web-based communities, brands and content providers.

- What sort of marketing you are using to spread the word?

We use a mixture of both online and mobile-based advertising as well as word-of-mouth. We've found select international trade shows and speaking events to be particularly successful as well. Recently we've been focusing more on getting visibility through the mainstream media.

- What is the monetizing/revenue model? Is there any new model, which is being tried?

Monetizing mobile content and services has always been tricky and we've seen the evolution of a number of business models that have come and gone based on consumer demands and the continually changing mobile environment. For our customers we've found that the best revenue models are the ones that enterprises or content providers are already accustomed to which include SaaS (Software as a service) and revenue share on content sales. The newest model we're using is mobile advertising which is really simply a platform side-step from the online advertising model (but even so there is much scepticism still surrounding it).

- Which are the main competitors or major players in this market segment?

There are a number of competitors that have similar functionality (i.e. mobile site building or mobile community) from the US, UK, India and Germany but none that have really integrated all the elements together into the kind of ecosystem that is Mostyle. Similar models that we could be compared to are NTT DoCoMo's i-mode or Apple's iTunes.

- What are the main technologies used behind this venture?

Our fine developers (Mat, Kim, SkullVarker and Luke) are prolific supporters of Open Source tools and systems so our core technology is built within a LAMP environment. On the mobile side, much of our systems are proprietary due to the lack of any suitable solutions since we started many years ago. We do conform to serving out XHTML-MP pages to a specification requiring MUCH handset testing in the past.

- What has been the most easy to use, out of box and helpful technology?

I guess the tool that provides value to both the development and project management elements of our business is TRAC which is a wonderful Open Source project management and bug tracking system which also houses our wiki.

- Are you using lot of open source tool sets for this?

The Mostyle Platform and our internal development tools are largely Open Source based.

- What is your operating environment (operating system) and what type of database you are using?

Mostyle is running on linux while our development machines are a mixed WindowsXP/Ubuntu environment. We use MySQL as our database.

- What's your thought on the start-ups culture and innovation coming out of Australia especially in media and telecom?

I think there's some incredible, world-class innovation coming out of Australia in the media

and telecom space and oddly enough I only find out about them when I'm overseas rather than from the local press back home in Australia. Recently I think the local community among the start-ups particularly in Melbourne are really coming together in strength and this is fantastic to see. Hopefully this will generate more attention to the innovations here and also provide a supportive environment for the up-and-coming guys to be able to get some advice if not find mentors.

- What do you think the government (federal and state) should do to improve the culture of innovation and the telecom industry?

We receive support on both a state and federal level which has been fantastic. In terms of improving the culture of innovation I would agree that tax benefits would certainly help out as well as much more local and international promotion of Australian innovation in the telecoms industry.

- If you are given an opportunity to change the nation, what 3 things you will do?

1) Make Australians, from a very young age, realize that Australia IS a part of Asia and that we should embrace our geographic closeness to forge stronger cultural and economic ties. We need to start thinking regionally and showing an interest in our neighbours rather than thinking that we're still just a British colony.

2) Reward innovators/entrepreneurs. Australia should be a nation that not only praises and makes heroes of Sportsmen but also rewards and supports on a national level the great innovators and entrepreneurs that are both here and overseas.

3) Our natural resources won't last forever, how about placing more emphasis on Australia's incredible IP strengths and capabilities. We have some of the most brilliant minds here – we should tell the world.

- How often do you catch up with others trying similar things and where do you catch up? Do you have dedicated communities in your city?

Oddly enough I catch up with others in the mobile space mostly while overseas, either at conferences, tradeshows, xmedialab's or presentations.

- Do you have any advice for people who want to start their venture?

Make sure you enjoy what you're doing, the fun and excitement is in the doing, whatever the outcome.

Make sure you have the support of your friends and family – sometimes a few words of encouragement can really boost your determination.

Surround yourself with smart people, experienced people, creative people and most importantly – ethical people – entrepreneurship can swing both ways.

Thanks Alex for sharing your thoughts with us. All the best for future.

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