

Bluetooth: Losing the manual is the first step to the future

STOCKHOLM- July 24 2002 - Despite being one of the veterans in the arena of wireless technology, Bluetooth still has a long and bumpy road ahead of it before the technology can realise its full potential. The success of Bluetooth will be determined by how well manufacturers and application developers can apply the rules of simplicity and consumer friendliness, according to a new study by leading wireless advisor Northstream.

Bluetooth has a number of advantages and is clearly suitable for mass market, voice-centric mobile devices due to the low cost structure, low power consumption and voice support. The gloomy market situation in the wireless industry has increased the interest in Bluetooth as a potential new source of revenue and expanding market share for operators.

In the current marketplace, operators are looking for new ways to connect to and utilise their wireless networks. Bluetooth can serve as an enabler for mobile operators with GPRS and 3G services, to facilitate mobile data usage.

- It is clear that the expected take-up of Bluetooth has been slower than anticipated. The main explanation is that Bluetooth is too cumbersome for the average user. The way to success for Bluetooth equipment manufacturers is to address usability issues now, says Jan Johannesson at wireless advisor Northstream.

In order to realise the potential of Bluetooth a number of steps are needed to improve user friendliness:

- Bluetooth equipment manufacturers need to focus on what consumers actually need, not the intricacies of the technology.
 - An intuitive user interface. It must be easier and faster to initiate a Bluetooth-application and it should be possible to launch a Bluetooth application with a minimum of configuration (if any).
 - More intuitive out-of-the-box set-up procedures and smooth interaction between devices.
 - Interoperability between Bluetooth-applications from different manufacturers.
 - Bluetooth equipment manufacturers need to consider ways of enabling mobile operators to efficiently combine Bluetooth and e.g. GPRS and 3G services to facilitate mobile data usage.
- The experience with WAP and GPRS clearly illustrates the negative effects of an overly complex user interface. Most often, the average user does not bother to read the manual before trying out the respective Bluetooth-enabled product, and if the user does not succeed in getting it up and running on the first or second attempt, it is very unlikely they will ever give it a third try. That is why less is more when it comes Bluetooth, says Jan Johannesson.

Bluetooth is a standard for short-range connectivity that has attracted a lot of attention in the wireless industry. Initially launched in 1998, the Bluetooth Special Interest Group (SIG) has now attracted more than 2000 member companies.

The report "Bluetooth usability" is available for download at www.northstream.se

About Northstream

Northstream provides strategic technology and business advice to the global wireless industry. Northstream has assembled a multinational team with some of the world's best experts and analysts on wireless communication business and technology. Northstream works for several of the world's leading operators and system suppliers, e.g. Vodafone, AT&T, NTT DoCoMo, Mitsubishi, Ericsson, Nokia and Siemens. Northstream also works for other consultancies such as Accenture and some of the leading investment banks and financial institutions. Northstream is established in Stockholm (Sweden), Sophia Antipolis (France), Tokyo (Japan), Hong Kong (HK) and Henley on Thames (UK).

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