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Game changing

I've been trying to get fit running for a little while and have just bought my first Apple device, an iPod Shuffle.....

Although small and beautiful I'm not normally keen on Apple due to the real classic 'lock-in' but as my wife has an iPod I have to admit it, they got me. The lock-in one of the reasons that I never got an iPhone as I'm a Linux Ubuntu user and although the iPhone has all these apps to do stuff you don't want I couldn't see there being too much support for Linux with the iPhone. The second reason is that I think the future of mobile smartphones is in Google Android (so I got one!). Why do I say this?

Glad you asked. Game Changer 1 – Mobile

I read an article online on how Google is going to shake up the mobile platform in a major way in the coming years. They have Android, which is their operating system for mobiles, and they've open sourced it so anyone should be able to develop on it. They've also got a version of the operating system 'powered by Google' which comes with all their applications (Google Mail, Maps etc) which the telco companies have taken on board. These applications are also all closed source and people wonder why the telcos have taken this version? Well here is the Game changer. Google will apparently give a revenue back to the telcos depending on the advertising that is done via that phone. Yep that's right, they are in effect paying the telcos to use Android.

I think this is inspired and if you are Microsoft with your Windows Mobile platform you are in trouble with your current pricing model. Microsoft is used to selling licences their Windows Mobile (per device) but now, even if they give it away (and thus is loss making from all the expenses of running that business division) that still won't cut it as Google are PAYING telcos to take Google Android.

You may be wondering what this has to do with GI – well read on as it ties in with the next Game Changer that Google did with Personal Navigation Devices (think TomTom)

Game Changer 2 – Personal Navigation Devices

I know this is old news on how Google are shaking up the PND industry but if you are not aware Google Maps in the US no longer uses TeleAtlas or NavTiq map data but now uses their own derived data from multiple sources – I would think their StreetView image capturing also captured lots of other data that they can use such as high detail GPS points etc.

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They have Map Maker for crowd sourcing mapping information and submitting map corrections. The latter is needed as there has been lots of talk about inaccuracies but the interesting thing is that apparently users accept issues more the less they pay for a service i.e. when it is free people are more tolerant of mistakes. I'm unsure whether this has reduced their market share in web mapping or not but time will tell.

Now the game changer is that in the US, if you have a phone with Google Maps for Mobile you can now get free turn-by-turn GPS navigation with voice guidance – basically a TomTom for free on your phone. I'm not sure yet whether I would rely on this but when things are free people will use them.

The interesting questions for us in Blighty is when / if their own derived data will hit the UK? Will life be easier for them with the freeing up of some of the OS data that has been announced?

Game Changer 3 – Making Public Data Public

I'm not sure of who saw this coming but I certainly didn't but nothing is written in stone as yet. I'm a little dubious on how far things will go – my cynical side wonders whether this will just mean that you can use OS OpenSpace (the hosted OS Version on Google Maps) or if we are lucky will it mean that you can download data, hopefully including CodePoint so anyone can access the full british postcode database with coordinates. I listened to a Radio 4 podcast with Sir Tim-Berners-Lee (who is driving this change forward as part of the Digital Britain initiative) who was asked whether the Derived Data issue would be fixed and he believed it would be – again, don't hold your breath but I've got my fingers crossed.

Now think how the Semantic Web (whereby data is interlinked and tagged behind the scenes) could be GI enabled in the UK with all this information readily available. This is why they are trying to open this up and I think this would definitely be a game changer...