

Keynote Eyes Mobile Growth

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By Kevin Murphy

Keynote Systems, best known as a web site test and measurement services provider, is putting more emphasis on its mobile data services business.

Chief executive Umang Gupta, in a recent interview, said that mobile accounts for over a quarter of the company's revenue, growing exponentially since Keynote acquired its way into the business last year.

Gupta told us that Keynote's speciality of test and measurement is even more valuable in the mobile world, where there are more moving parts on the network and the way content is presented from country to country is less standardized.

"If you have a problem on the internet, there are only so many moving parts. The problem is compounded by a factor of 10 in mobile and cellular systems," he said, pointing to the fact that data often has to jump between cellular networks and internet backbones and back again.

And the issues are compounded when you start talking about services that need to work across different devices on different networks in different countries, he said. The company's Mobile Device Perspective service offers real-world testing of services on real user devices around the world.

"Content is always cultural," he said. "Not only cultural in terms of different languages, but also functionally, such as the ways it is presented."

Gupta indicated that much of the mobile opportunity lies outside of its native US, primarily in fast-growing emerging markets such as China and India, where the phone is more prevalent than the PC.

"In the western world, mainly the US, the mobile world is an extension of your fixed systems," he said. "In the emerging world, countries like China, India and many others, the mobile systems are the first system people make investments in. There are many people there who have never seen a phone before except their mobile phones, and some have certainly never seen a PC before."

Mobile TV is one area Keynote is keeping an eye on, he said. It could take off soon, especially due to devices such as the iPod, he said. But Gupta doesn't think it's yet certain that its sister, the iPhone, will cause changes commensurate with the hype.

"Its success will depend largely on the user experience... if a user is not able to get his connection using a 3G network, he's not going to get good user experience," he said. "In terms of its actual impact it's too early to tell."

Outside the mobile arena, back in its traditional web market, Keynote is also keeping atop the movement to Ajax-style applications, planning a product refresh later this year that improves its ability to handle those types of web site, Gupta said.

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