

GyPSii targets growing smart phone market

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The iPhone has changed everything.

It will only be two years on June 29 since Apple launched its super-colorful, super-versatile smart phone, and in that time, it has gone from cool and exotic to ubiquitous – and in the process, changed what consumers want and expect their mobile phones to do.

Voice calls? Sure. Texting? Absolutely. But also clean, easy Web browsing; photos and video; social-networking tools, games and an endless stream of new applications.

That is the world in which GyPSii expects to flourish. Started in the Nether-

lands by a Rhode Islander, Dan Harple, and developed and sold by a multinational team with offices in Amsterdam, Finland, England, China and locally, Warwick, GyPSii has spent the last year carving out its place in the fast-growing smart phone market.

You know the iPhone tagline, “There’s an app for that”? GyPSii, which is available on the iPhone store but also works on a wide range of other devices, bundles social networking, multimedia and “geo-tracking” features in a single, easy-to-use interface.

Find a great Japanese restaurant? You can take a picture, easily map it on your

phone, add your comments, connect with other comments left by fellow users, share it all with your friends, and even find friends who are nearby and could come and join you at the sushi bar.

Downtown with nothing to do? GyPSii can help you track down your friends, connect with them and meet up. And you can share your notes, pictures and video on the Web, too.

Until recently, little of this would have come naturally to most mobile phone users. But very quickly, with a good nudge from the iPhone, Facebook, Twitter and other social networks have been changing

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IMAGE COURTESY GYPSII

SOCIAL NETWORK: GyPSii, which is available for iPhones and a host of other devices, uses GPS technology to help users track their friends and share Web content.

GyPSii

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the culture. And now Google’s Android platform, first available to users on the T-Mobile G1 launched in October, is accelerating that trend.

“As the market evolves, we expect it to move pretty fast, particularly because of the tipping points” created by the iPhone and now Android, said Shane Lennon, GyPSii’s senior vice president of marketing, in a recent interview.

“They are just going to create a different benchmark around the user experience and what people expect with their cell phones,” he added, “and they will all evolve into smart phone capabilities – whether they’re called that or not.”

That’s where GyPSii’s two-pronged strategy should pay off well, Lennon said. On one hand, GyPSii has created an application that consumers are already using today – you can download off the GyPSii site or the iPhone or BlackBerry stores, among others.

In China, where GyPSii established a presence early in conjunction with the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, building partnerships with major manufacturers and operators, the company has grown a “significant” user base, Lennon said, especially around Beijing and Shanghai.

But beyond iPhone users, for whom downloading applications is easy and natural – GyPSii didn’t really work to build a large social network right away in most markets, Lennon said, because most users

won’t download applications to their phones, and “those who do, don’t find it easy – it’s clunky.”

So instead, GyPSii focused on getting its software preloaded on new phones. It has made deals with LG, Nokia and Samsung, among others, to develop good distribution channels. Now, as new phones with built-in GyPSii go on the market – Samsung has a new line, and GyPSii is preparing to launch on another smart phone within a couple of weeks, Lennon said – that aspect of the business is about to go into high gear.

“We’re hitting our first promotional phase,” Lennon said. “These will be our first efforts to build a base.”

Then there’s a whole other market – and there, you could say, GyPSii is taking a page from Apple’s and Google’s playbooks. As phone makers and operators worldwide seek to match Apple’s successes by launching their own super-colorful, super-versatile smart phones, they don’t want to have to reinvent the wheel, so GyPSii has offered to help.

In February, the company launched the GyPSii OpenExperience API (OEx), an all-inclusive platform that allows phone makers to embed GyPSii’s capabilities right into their phones, under their own brands, with location-specific features and content, “powered by GyPSii.”

“They want to create user experiences similar to the iPhone, but don’t want to do it on their own or take an off-the-shelf product like GyPSii, but rather take their API,” he said. This option makes it easier and cheaper, he added, while providing the

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SHANE LENNON

GyPSii
senior vice president
of marketing



IMAGE COURTESY GYPSII

MAPPING IT OUT: In February, the company launched GyPSii OpenExperience API (OEx), a platform that allows phone makers to embed GyPSii capabilities into their phones.

assurance that GyPSii has the skill set and capabilities to manage user profiles and user-generated content, for example, and that users will be able to interact whether they are using an iPhone, a Samsung, an LG or a Nokia.

This will also allow GyPSii to be usable in more languages, for example, and it could integrate ads, either directly through GyPSii or working with other networks, Lennon said. And for users, it will be much easier than downloading an application – though even as the API initiative proceeds, GyPSii is also expanding its presence on mobile app stores.

Already in the last year, GyPSii has grown about 40 or 50 percent, Lennon said, and the company expects to keep growing at a healthy pace. The software itself will evolve as more technologies come into

play, he said, but the core idea will remain the same – a “mobile lifestyle” tool that allows you to document and share your experiences and get information.

GyPSii is part of a public company – GeoSentric, based in Finland and the Netherlands – so Lennon was cautious about sharing the team’s goals for the coming year. But he did note that “we’re hiring where most people aren’t,” and the New England team, which focuses on engineering and marketing, is already at about 30.

And while the mobile phone market, as a whole, is at best flat, Lennon added, smart phones continue to grow in the double digits, “and [are] accelerating in every country.” That, he said, “is where the focus of our market is.” ■