

Will you be part of the location revolution?

Location-based technologies are the future of the mobile applications market. But they are not going to take off overnight...

The location-based applications market is very much in its infancy, and we still don't know exactly what location technology will be capable of in the coming years. What we do know is that consumers can and will benefit from location-based services delivered via the mobile phones they carry with them every day.

Consumer uptake will occur in phases, and any services that do not fit in with the current phase will simply not take off. Developers need to wait until the opportunity is ripe to develop individual technologies and applications.

Phase One - Individual Use... We are currently in Phase One of location-based application development. We at Penrillian have already carried out a number of phase one location projects for our customers. The T-Traffic NaviGate application developed by Penrillian for T-Mobile uses the data capabilities of the user's mobile device to update drivers with the latest traffic information in real-time.

Phase Two- Group Use... We will enter Phase Two only when consumers start taking Phase One services for granted and have them either pre-installed or downloaded on their mobile devices. Mobile phones will become more sophisticated and location technologies more robust, allowing people to share their location information with a group of contacts, perhaps friends or colleagues.

Phase Three - Mass Market... As for Phase Three we can only speculate as to how location technologies may be utilised further down the line. An increase in consumer demand will result in a snowball effect leading to mass adoption and true ubiquity.

Penrillian's Charles Weir expects that companies will quickly learn to make their data collection methods suitably anonymous in order to abate consumer privacy fears. Consumers will be incentivised to sign up to a variety of free services in exchange for access to information regarding their location.

Charles says: **"This is when data based on the movement of the masses will become of interest to third parties. For the first time businesses and other organisations will find it useful to access data not only about individuals, but about a lot of people."**



Take Google, for example: Google is perhaps the leader in location-based services, and illustrates the three phases nicely. The Phase One application, 'Google Maps', is a great tool for individuals who want to find out where they are, plan where they want to go and find services that are close to them.

Google's Phase Two 'Latitude' extensions to Google maps allows users to share their location and status with friends. Users effectively leave a trail for friends and contacts to follow. This however, is still in the early stages of adoption.

And clearly, Google is expecting in due course, to be able to provide Phase Three style services, such as advertising through Google Maps.

The story so far... Penrillian has already seen a lot of Phase One demand and we expect this to increase as more consumers adopt the idea of location-based services. We are currently working on Pos^n, a positioning solution which uses the location of local radio masts and mapping information, to provide an accurate location solution that works indoors and uses little battery.

We are also working on various government-led projects including a location-based car sharing application and a navigation platform to help consumers find the best public transport routes around London in the run-up to the Olympic Games.

If you have an idea for a location based application that you wish to discuss with Penrillian please email charles.weir@penrillian.com

What will the future hold? The potential for location-based technology is enormous and could be applied to anything. For example, playing 3D real-world games where other players on the same street are involved in your game, or arranging commercial business meetings with those in the same area.

Companies will find a way to gather and work with the locations of many customers, who will allow them access to this information in return for a useful service. It remains to be seen what value-added services will evolve and how these will be funded, but it is likely that information gathered might be 'sold' on to external companies for marketing purposes. This marks the beginnings of Phase Three.

When we gaze into our crystal ball we see mass market adoption of location solutions. In fact, maybe one day all applications will be based on location in one way or another. This spells massive opportunity for innovation and revenue generation amongst the mobile software industry, so watch this space!