

[You know what? Novarra's "OneWeb" mobile app program is actually pretty good.](#)

Posted by [Cian](#) on Feb 18, 2010 13:37

<http://www.gomonews.com/you-know-what-novarras-oneweb-mobile-app-program-is-actually-pretty-good/>

Tags: [Developer](#), [mobile](#), [mobile app](#), [mobile application](#), [mobile developer](#), [mobile device](#), [mobile internet](#), [mobile phone](#), [Mobile Web](#), [Mobile World Congress](#), [MWC](#), [novarra](#), [oneweb](#), [widget](#)



How many times have you heard “develop once, publish anywhere”? It’s a phrase that actually makes me stop listening these days. It has been promised so many times by so many different companies that it has lost all meaning. So when [oneweb](#) came up in my interview with **Randy Cavaiani, VP Marketing for Novarra**, I almost shook my head in despair. But as I talked to Randy, I realised that [Novarra](#) might actually be on to something here. *Might* be.

What’s oneweb?

oneweb is Novarra’s attempt to capitalise on three trends it has noticed in the last year. Those trends are:

- 1) More interest in micro-browsers. The idea of putting a full mobile web client on your phone isn’t all that hot these days. People prefer micro-browsers where the crunchy work is done on a server somewhere, and a nicely mobile-optimised version of the web page is sent to your phone. A lot of popular browsers are doing it this way, including Bolt and Skyfire. There are major benefits to this style of browser... which we’ll get to as we look at the other two trends.
- 2) Cloud-based computing is becoming more popular on mobile phones in general. Novarra maintains its own cloud-based system, the Vision server, to serve cloud needs.
- 3) Network congestion. Mobile networks all over the world are being spanked by mobile data - most famously AT&T with the iPhone. But Verizon has woken up to it since the launch of the Droid. All this web browsing is kicking their ass. By offering to compress mobile internet data before it’s actually sent to the phones, Novarra claims it can cut the data payload of a site by 50% - 90%

Yes, but you still haven’t told me what oneweb is.

Right, right, sorry. Ok, so oneweb is a mobile web portal:

I’m waiting for a better graphic from Novarra, but that shows you the basics. It has an integrated web search box there, with URL entry, social networking and gmail integrated.

So far it seems pretty samey

So far, yes. oneweb has a couple of advantages - which, when added together, could actually end up being something pretty valuable to consumers AND developers.

- 1) It’s mobile web based - so it genuinely is multi-platform. Again that’s not exactly unique, but read on.



2) It's backed by the Novarra micro-browser - Novarra has its own white-label browser that offers the same kind of service that Bolt or Skyfire do. The interesting thing is that it's not a downloadable app... Novarra is working with OEMs and operators to get the browser pre-installed. Randy couldn't tell me WHO they were, but I was assured they were "Tier One". So my immediate question was why anyone should stick with a Novarra "native" microbrowser rather than jumping to someone like Bolt? His explanation was simple: "When you have two competing browsers on a phone, the user experience is compromised. Not only do you have to hunt down the second browser, but some links will automatically open in the native browser. Since our browser offers a similar service and has the convenience of being native, we don't see a reason for people to switch". Damn, that's confident. On top of that, oneweb will work in conjunction with the native Novarra browser on a device, giving extremely convenient downloading options for oneweb apps and widgets.

CLARIFICATION - I don't want to give the impression that oneweb and the Novarra micro-browser are interconnected in any way. They both run off the Vision, but Novarra has asked me to add this clarification, just to make sure nobody is under any false impressions: "oneweb does not utilise the Novarra micro-browser. This service utilises a cloud-based development and delivery model, that does indeed reduce traffic to help with network congestion concerns, to allow web, widgets and mobile apps within the phone's existing browser. In effect, only the Novarra server is part of the oneweb service."

3) It helps developers - the entire oneweb system is based on full internet technology. HTML is the mainstay of the service. Novarra has an SDK for releasing HTML apps on this environment. And since oneweb is platform agnostic, those apps can theoretically be download to any phone in the world.

4) It's system light - Novarra recognises that the majority of handsets in the world are still feature phones. oneweb is extremely light weight, and can run on even quite basic devices, which massively boosts the potential audience.

My final question was "why should developers trust Novarra?" They've been stung before by services that promise true multi-platform development. Novarra says the simplest way to put them at ease is to restate that we're talking about HTML here. Standards are slowly starting to emerge in mobile, and much of the content is being developed on HTML. What oneweb is about is making that content discoverable and deliverable to a vast number of devices.

What we think?

There was more to the interview than that - we spoke about how easy it is for operators and OEMs to pre-install Novarra, and about end-user oriented features that are being worked on including customisable UI and advertising. But for me the success or failure of this service comes down to one all-important question:

Can you get it pre-installed?

Honestly, I think Novarra is offering a pretty damn good service here. I can't see there being many complaints. But it HAS to have scale to succeed.