



Vodafone advances website rendering for mobiles

Vodafone has launched its mobile internet strategy, and claims to have made significant advances in rendering web pages for mobile devices.

The operator hinted at the strategy when it launched its first flat-rate mobile-data surfing package on Friday. According to Vodafone, a new way of handling content on its network will make most sites viewable on almost all its handsets.

"What we've done is [to] work with some of our suppliers, such as Novarra, to ensure that pages display properly. [The technology] understands how the web page is put together and repurposes that for mobile," a spokesperson told ZDNet.co.uk on Wednesday, adding that Novarra's technology was able to detect which handset was being used to access the content.

Vodafone's spokesperson claimed that 96 percent of the operator's currently available handsets — about 150 models — would benefit from the technology, because they all have a GPRS radio. Because the process involves compressing the content to roughly a tenth of its original size, users will also experience much lower data usage and higher download speeds, the spokesperson said, while conceding that some Flash-heavy sites may still not render as intended.

Many popular sites, such as YouTube and MySpace, have traditionally been difficult to render on a small screen. Vodafone, however, has already partnered with these and several other sites to deliver mobile-friendly versions of their content.

In a further development of Vodafone's mobile internet strategy, users will be able to aggregate up to five email accounts — including webmail and POP3 — into a unified client.