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Vodafone goes live with new content adaptation system

By Paul Clearwater

After nearly 16 months of planning and testing, Vodafone went live on Thursday last week with its new content adaptation system, which formats websites for mobile devices.



Many customers could not access websites previously because the fact remains that most websites are designed for PCs rather than mobile devices.

The cost of accessing websites was also prohibitive. The cost to access the Stuff.co.nz homepage for example would have cost around \$5 and could have taken five minutes to download fully, explains product manager mobile internet Christ Malcolm. But now, Stuff.co.nz can be accessed in a matter of seconds for around \$0.70, he says. The website's homepage was not formatted for mobile devices, meaning it was in some cases unreadable.

Many devices are also unable to support the likes of Flash, which depletes the mobile web experience.

The majority of WAP-enabled devices flying under Vodafone's flag can now access the majority of websites.

Malcolm says that the programme formats websites "on the fly" through the company's gateway. A user's request now goes through the content adaptation gateway, which then finds the phone type in use and then formats the website accordingly.

The system, devolved by Israeli company InfoGin and integrated onto the Vodafone network platform by US company 724, not only makes the user experience more fluid but also saves on data costs.

The new system, although not having a direct effect on Vodafone's new \$1 a day casual mobile data usage plan, did play a part in lowering overall data access costs, says Malcolm.

The same system was originally developed in the UK, Malcolm says since then they have learned a few lessons, which they have applied to the New Zealand platform.

In comparison, Telecom uses Yahoo!Xtra oneSearch as its default search option from its mobile portal. Head of mobile products Jason Foden says sites accessed through Yahoo!Xtra's oneSearch are automatically adapted for viewing on a mobile device.

He says Telecom's new network will introduce new functionality to optimise customer's viewing of websites. "That will be all websites, giving customers access to what they want to do online, not limiting usage to a few sites that have been pre-selected or those that sit within a walled garden," says Foden.