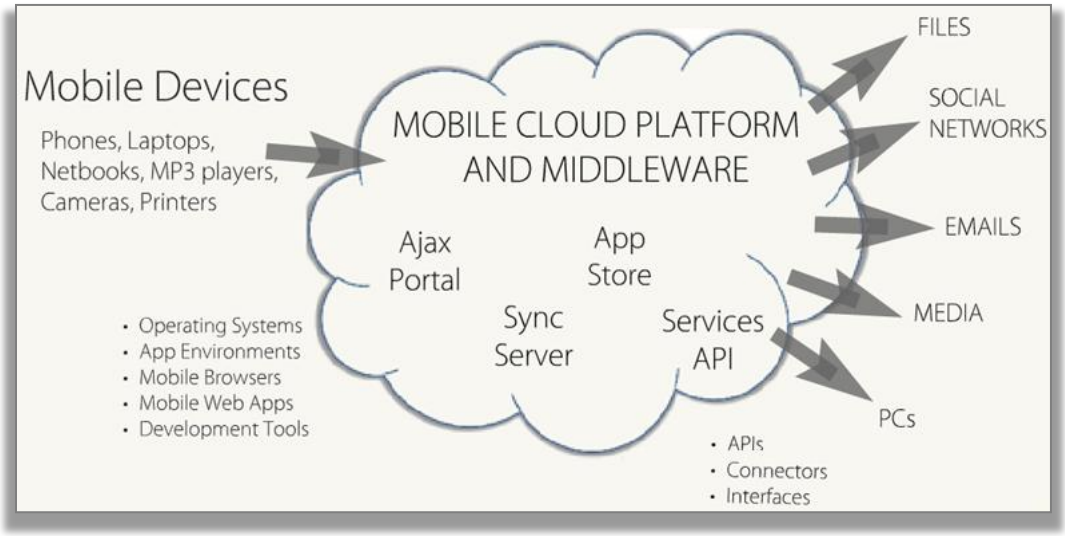
Top Ten Mobile Companies Choose Mobile Open Source

Learn how leaders are rapidly adopting mobile open source and transforming the industry



October, 2009

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I. Executive Summary

One of the industry's best kept secrets is that leading mobile companies are rapidly adopting open source, not just for devices (e.g. Android) but as a platform for innovative services. This report discusses:

- Ten top mobile companies that recently selected an open source server platform
- Why they chose it
- How their examples apply to every mobile company and are transforming the industry

Open source has evolved since it was purely developer-ware. It has steadily progressed up stack, from operating systems and browsers, to infrastructure and applications. Yet mention open source to many mobile executives and it still conjures up images of techies with compilers and command line utilities.

In the past several months, ten of the most dominant and influential companies in mobile have made major commitments to an open source platform. These companies include tier-1 telcos and operators, the largest device manufacturers, the most prominent infrastructure suppliers and leading portals and content providers. Considering the state of the global economy, the commitment of these companies to open source is astounding and perhaps unrivalled as a major technology trend in *any* industry.

These top ten companies selected open source for 'bet-your-business' projects involving hundreds of millions of dollars for billions of users. The projects include innovative mobile cloud services and devices, fourth generation (4G) apps, rich media synchronization and mobile social networking. In the past few months, these companies have pushed open source across the chasm to mainstream acceptance.

These companies opted for open source over proprietary solutions, not due to an ideological love of openness, but for strategic and practical reasons that purport competitive edge -- it provides:

- the most extensible platform for bringing new wireless services to market *asap*
- the broadest device compatibility, to reach the largest addressable market
- 100% source code availability, for complete control and flexibility
- the maximum value and lowest risk

This report profiles these ten companies and provides insight into their selection of open source. It describes the rationale behind their decisions as well as lessons for others in the mobile industry.

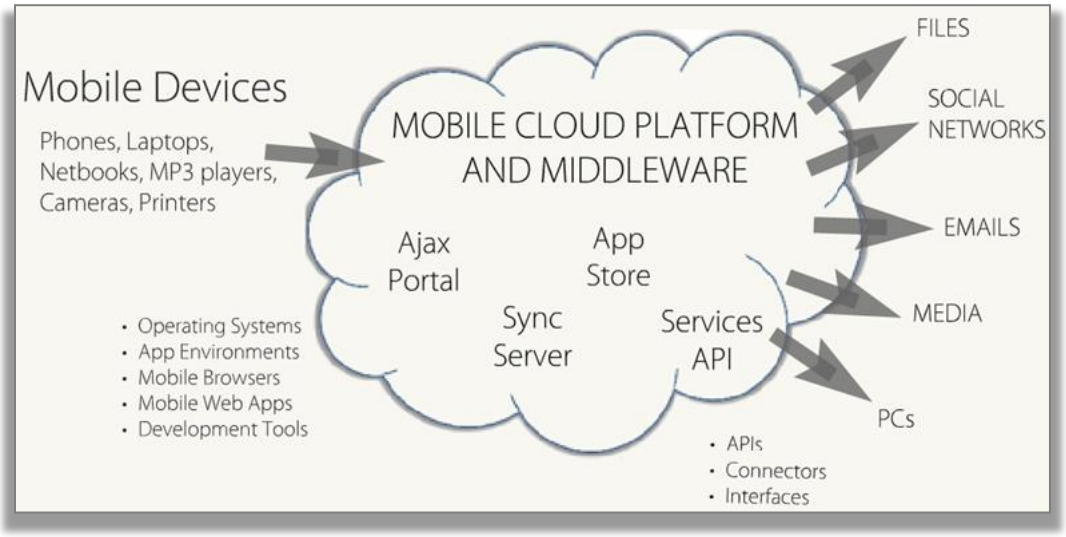
These top ten consider open source to be their new secret weapon in the wireless war. They understand that the new battleground is differentiation arising from mobile software and services. They do not want to publicize their use of open source, as they do not want to tip off competitors. This report helps industry participants understand one of its best kept secrets, which is how open source has become a game changer for winning the mobile war. Executives should now be asking: why are competitors racing to adopt open source, and what are we doing about this? The old adages of open source as only for techies, or less ready for prime time, no longer apply.

II. Mobile Open Source Overview

Before describing how ten top mobile companies are using open source, it may be helpful to start with a definition. If you are already familiar with mobile open source, you may want to skip to the next section.

For the purposes of this report, open source means that the programming source code for a software system or application is available. By having access to the source code, developers can review the code and modify it in ways that are impossible with closed source. The opposite of open source is closed source, which is how commercial software has typically been distributed in the past.

With respect to mobile, a project that has gained a lot of momentum for devices is Google Android. On the server side, the most popular mobile open source project is Funambol, which has been downloaded three+ million times by 50,000 developers in 200 countries. Funambol provides mobile data sync, push email and device management for billions of devices. Funambol originated as an open source project to keep any type of data in sync between any mobile device and backend system or database. As Funambol is a server, it complements the device-centric Android. It is represented by the mobile cloud platform and middleware graphic in the diagram below.



Developers like open source because the source code allows them to deal with the inherent complexity arising from billions of devices. Open source is more than just source code, however. A vibrant project such as Funambol also allows for extensive 'crowdsourcing' expertise to be shared, which allows people to learn from each other and to collaborate.

There are other mobile open source components, such as browsers and development tools, that are beyond the scope of this report. If you are interested in learning more about mobile open source, a good starting point is the Funambol community forge at http://www.funambol.org.

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III. The Top Ten

The following table lists ten major mobile companies that recently adopted open source. It provides a description of their market position, their project using open source and their rationale for selecting it.

Due to confidentiality restrictions, companies are not identified by name, however, you can still gain a good understanding of how leading companies are leveraging open source.

Company Type	Description	Project	Why Select and Use Open Source
Global Top 10 Telco based in Europe	Tens of millions of business and consumer customers worldwide	Major new mobile data sync service and appliance	Considered proprietary solutions but engineers highly desired open source for complete project control and flexibility
Tier-1 Mobile Operator based in North America	Tens of millions of business and consumer users	New cloud-based mobile data services	Jettisoned former proprietary solution in favor of open source due to its superior scalability, capabilities and flexibility
Leading Provider of 4G Network Services	Deployment for tens of millions of users	New cloud-based rich media apps and services for business and consumer users	Device management & data synchronization; open source critical for optimizing 4G services and attracting a vibrant developer community
Top Global Device Manufacturer	Ships hundreds of millions of devices annually	Important new device platform for technology and business professionals	Device management for their new platform as engineers wanted an open source and standards-based solution, plus they were very comfortable with the code as they downloaded it and used prior to a formal evaluation

Company Type	Description	Project	Why Select and Use Open Source
Top Global Device Manufacturer	Ships hundreds of millions of devices Annually	New category of devices for mobile social networking	Engineering leadership had strong desire for open source approach as strategic way forward to build next generation of mobile cloud services
Top Smartphone Manufacturer	Introduced groundbreaking smartphone in 2009	Next-generation device that raised the bar for mobile social networking, messaging and data synchronization	Jettisoned proprietary software after it failed to meet requirements for capabilities and performance in favor of open source solution that was adapted and optimized for their needs
Prominent Mobile Infrastructure and Equipment Provider	Manages operations and supplies technology for leading mobile networks worldwide	Scalable next-generation platform of cloud-based mobile apps and services	Evaluated numerous alternatives, selected open source as it provided the best fit with their systems architecture; it also supported the maximum number of mobile devices and could be fully adapted for their customer and market requirements
Prominent Mobile Infrastructure and Equipment Provider	Manages operations and supplies technology for leading mobile networks worldwide	Scalable next-generation platform of cloud-based mobile apps and services	Open source solution supported maximum number of devices and provided full ability to adapt solution
Large Portal and Content Provider	> 100 million users	Contacts and calendars sync with smartphones and feature phones	Wanted open source and standards-based infrastructure
Large Internet Service Provider	> 70 million users	Push email & PIM sync for smartphone users	Open, low cost MS Exchange alternative

IV. Trends and Discussion

What are the common themes behind these projects that compelled companies to select a mobile open source platform? Here are the key trends and drivers transforming the mobile industry.

- Rapid development and time to market -- in several cases, company developers downloaded Funambol open source software and built working prototypes to validate a concept and to illustrate to peers and management that open source could rapidly build a new mobile service. This accelerated their technology evaluation and gave them confidence that the software could achieve their objectives. This is in stark contrast to a typical proprietary software vendor evaluation, in that company developers have full access to the code, allowing them to evaluate it on their terms and timetable. In many cases, companies did not contact Funambol until they convinced themselves to fund and complete the project, at which point they became interested in Funambol's commercial version (which provides additional capabilities such as large scale deployment and intellectual property protection). At the end of the day, companies believe that open source sped product development and time to market, and lowered their risk, as companies had complete visibility into the technology.

- Out with proprietary solutions, in with open source -- in multiple situations, companies retired legacy and proprietary software, for several reasons, including expensive and time consuming maintenance, lack of scalability, performance issues and becoming fed up with proprietary software vendor relationships. They adopted open source as their evaluations ensured that the software met their needs. Companies found it refreshing to work with an open source company that was transparent and collaborative in their interactions.

- Open platform for mobile innovation -- these companies are working on leading edge projects, such as 4G applications, mobile cloud services and mobile social networking. It was critical to use a robust, flexible platform that could be easily adapted for a wide range of mobile needs, rather than use a closed, point solution. Several companies specifically wanted to ensure that their next generation of mobile services was based on an open, extensible, standards-based foundation and infrastructure, as they believe that this enables them to quickly respond to market opportunities and changes. They did not want to depend on or be beholden to a proprietary software vendor or technology to make changes on their behalf, they wanted to be able to respond to the market quickly and to control their own destiny.

- Mobile data sync (DS) and device management (DM) -- these companies' projects sync diverse types of data and content with myriad mobile phones, social networks, email systems and computers via the internet, and remotely manage devices connected to mobile networks. They selected Funambol as they found it to be the dominant open source standards-based solution for mobile DS and DM, which are increasing in importance as the mobile data and services market heats up.

- Maximum device compatibility -- a major tenet behind these company decisions to adopt open source was their drive to support the greatest number of mobile phones and wireless devices, including laptops, netbooks, mp3 players, e-readers, printers, digital cameras, appliances, even automobiles. They believe that open source provides the greatest flexibility to support new devices more quickly. This is partially due to Funambol's extensive worldwide developer and user community that helps test the software on devices worldwide, as well as the full access to source code.

- Ultimate control -- perhaps the most compelling factor influencing these companies' decision to opt for open source was that they believe that open source provides complete control. This includes the ability to customize, optimize, brand and localize the solutions for their needs. They viewed Funambol as providing the best of both worlds -- based on the most important mobile standards, with the freedom to develop and innovate as they choose. R&D groups and organizations with a development culture strongly prefer open source over proprietary solutions, as it enables them to avoid hitting a wall, or being dependent on a third party's priorities.

- Better value, scalability, performance, capabilities and user interface -- the companies evaluated proprietary software and found Funambol open source to be superior in numerous areas, including value (purchase price and maintenance costs) and total cost of ownership. Several companies benchmarked Funambol software to ensure it could support millions of users on commodity hardware, which not only proved that the software scaled but could also save significant money. Many of the companies preferred the new look-and-feel of the Funambol end user portal, which they viewed as more modern and easier-to-use than proprietary solutions.

In general, these ten companies strongly believe they can gain competitive advantage by leveraging an open, extensible platform that lets them rapidly bring innovative mobile services to market. They believe that an open source platform positions them for the greatest success by allowing them to keep their technology and market options open.

V. Summary

The top ten mobile companies in this report are not the only organizations that recently made major commitments to an open source platform, they are just the highest profile. There are many others that recently chose mobile open source software, ranging from one of the largest providers of cable services to 20,000+ organizations that deployed the Funambol open source Community Edition for millions of users.

This report illustrates that open source has crossed the chasm to mainstream adoption as companies believe that it provides significant competitive advantage. This advantage stems from an open, extensible platform for rapidly delivering innovative mobile services, complete control and flexibility, broadest device compatibility and maximum value.

Here are ways to learn more about how mobile open source can benefit your organization:

- Read about Funambol mobile open source: http://www.funambol.com
- Download a free white paper or market research: http://www.funambol.com/solutions/library.php
- Download open source software or documentation: http://www.funambol.org
- Try Funambol on your phone via the free myFUNAMBOL demo portal: http://my.funambol.com
- Discuss your mobile needs with Funambol: http://www.funambol.com/contact/contactsales.php

VI. About Funambol

Funambol is the leading provider of mobile open source cloud sync and push email solutions for billions of devices. Funambol open source software has been downloaded over three million times by 50,000 developers in 200 countries. The commercial version of Funambol has been deployed by the largest device manufacturers, mobile operators, portals, content & service providers, software companies and system integrators in the world, including companies such as AOL, 1&1, EarthLink and CA, Inc. Funambol is headquartered in Redwood City, California with an R&D center in Italy. For more information, please visit www.funambol.com**.** You can also follow Funambol on Twitter at http://twitter.com/funambol.