

Day one



By [Angus Robinson](#)

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The first thing to note about this year's [Mobile World Congress](#) is the new venue (Fira Gran Via in Barcelona, Spain). About 15 minutes further out of the city than the previous venue, many people were skeptical about the need for change. However, when you see the scale of the new conference and exhibition centre, you get it. There was no way the original venue could handle the incredible growth that this industry is projecting.

These daily updates are going to give a snapshot of some of the highlights I have been exposed to. When attending the conference stream there is no time to visit the thousands of exhibitors. Additionally, some of the exhibition stands are so massive that they each need about 20-30 minutes to experience properly. There is, of course, the 'mine is bigger than yours' game that the likes of Samsung, Huawei and ZTE are playing.

Overall view of the industry

The first keynote of the day had CEOs from some of the world's largest MNOs (mobile network operators), giving their perspective of the state of the industry and the challenges it faces. The speakers were Randall Stevenson, AT&T CEO; Xi Guohua, chairman China Mobile; Cesar Alierta, chairman and CEO Telefonica; and Vittorio Colao, Vodaphone CEO.

There were some clear commonalities between their presentations:

- The migration from 2G to 3G to 4G has been the fastest technology adoption in history, pushing MNOs to battle with new market opportunities before the previous generation's ones have been fully realised.
- Stevenson from AT&T said that we are moving from the mobile era to the LTE and cloud era, for which he doesn't really have an appropriate name yet.
 - The mobile cloud is one of the biggest business opportunities (and challenges) that businesses face in the next three to five years.
- The investment in 4G/LTE is now a reality with rapid rollout planned this year in both infrastructure, devices and services.
 - China Mobile already has 200,000 LTE base stations live and calls it a trial! It also plans to sell 120million LTE handsets this year.
- Data growth continues to cause network management challenges, with more data consumed in 2012 than in all the previous years combined.
 - Mobile networks are carrying the equivalent of 330billion MP3s per month in data traffic.
 - A thought to ponder: if only 15% of the mobile subscribers have smartphones and this is the amount of data traffic being consumed, imagine what will happen when the other 85% are smartphoned. No wonder we need so many undersea cables.
- There was a strong tone of animosity from the MNOs towards the traditional internet players. They feel that they make the massive capital and operational expenditure to build the networks, and then the likes of Google, Apple (with Apps) and Skype reap the reward of their expenditure.
 - Telefonica CEO Cesar Alierta spoke passionately about needing a 'level playing field' between the internet

companies and MNOs. He was referring specifically to the regulatory constraints that MNOs experience in relation to the completely unregulated internet world.

- Ironically, MNOs which are traditionally very comfortable with being closed, dominant players are now all calling for openness, collaborative innovation and open access to networks. This was a direct poke at Apple and Google.
- To support this view, a group of 17 MNOs has committed their support to Mozilla's Firefox OS.
- An innovation from Vodafone was the presentation of their 'Red' tariff which allows a single data bundle/contract to be consumed by multiple devices. So gone are the days of trying to remember to top up three different SIMs with data.

Mobile's role in Vertical Disruption

There is no doubt that many industries are primed for significant transformation and disruption, largely driven by the access to reliable high-speed mobile broadband.



Nancy Brown from the American Heart Association gave some amazing insights into how they view the evolution of healthcare provision. She viewed mobile tech as the game changer that puts healthcare in consumers' hands and encourages taking control of their own health.

- Traditionally the relationship with a healthcare giver was limited to a few minutes with poor communication and non-existent follow-up. Then the internet happened:
 - Search was the first wave of disruption in healthcare, where information moved from push to pull where consumers are empowered recipients as co-creators of health issue related content.
 - Tracking is the second wave of disruption. Smartphones and sensors have made it easy to track everything from

counting steps taken, to heart rate monitoring and even meal types. However only, 7% of people that monitor their own health and activity performance use technology to track.

- An example, Heart360 patients are 50% more likely to have improved blood pressure management than continuing with traditional doctor visits.

- Gamification in healthcare has delivered amazing results in a really short time frame. A great example is a product/service called Zamzee, which increased activity in children and teens by 60% by getting them to level up, challenge friends and share their progress.

- Two final thoughts on healthcare:

- Healthcare is bankrupting developed countries and is not available in developing ones
- 17% of US GDP is spent on healthcare. This is not sustainable. Tech has to be used to create efficiencies and mobile must be the driver.

4G/LTE connectivity embedded in cars

General Motors made a bold announcement that all its future cars will have 4G/LTE connectivity embedded in them from the design phase of model development, and not as a brought-in afterthought.

I loved his comment that General Motors has always been a mobility and technology company, and now it's closing the loop with other mobile and technology companies.

It has the General Motors Developer Portal which provides details of the APIs (application programming interface) available for app and service development. Developers now have an entirely new platform to innovate for.

Mobile Premier Awards by AppCircus

The MPAs are like the World Cup for app developers. Countries around the world have app development competitions with the finalists coming to Barcelona every year for their three-minute pitch to a panel of judges.

The winner was:

- atooma.com which is an ITTT (If This Then That) Development Platform that allows anyone, yes anyone, to develop a series of commands that tells the platform to perform certain tasks based on triggers. For example, if I take a photo and email it to my photo editor at work. Have a look at www.atooma.com.

Other interesting apps:

- Blindsquare - hands free GPS for blind people using Foursquare data
- Circleme - an interest based social network allows you to connect with things you love and find more and only then connect with people
- Grabbity - a crazy accelerometer based game that makes you look mad while you are playing
- Jini - a contextual personal assistant app development platform looked very interesting
- The One - The Highlander for smartphones where you fight using your smartphone as the sword when you meet a challenger in the street. Awesome.
- MyPrice - helping freelancers charge the right amount for their services based on skills, location, expenses and scarcity. Clever.

That is a snapshot of day one. Follow me on Twitter [@angusrobinson](https://twitter.com/angusrobinson) and send your questions or comments.

Fro more:

- [\[Mobile World Congress 2013\] Day two](#)
- [\[Mobile World Congress 2013\] Day three](#)

ABOUT ANGUS ROBINSON

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