

May 14th, 2007

Bill Gates on local advertising: Yellow Pages gone in 5 years



Microsoft wagered an estimated \$1 billion of its competitive kitty that it will loudly beat search nemesis Google in both the mobile search and local advertising \$50 billion challenge, as I report and analyze in [What Microsoft is telling Google about mobile search](#): Tellme Networks, Inc.

In buying Tellme, Microsoft aims to bring the "power of voice technology to everyday life."

Mike McCue, co-founder and CEO of Tellme on what the Microsoft acquisition means:

This combination allows us to really fulfill our vision and bring it to billions of consumers, literally, on any phone. We love the idea of allowing people to be able to simply pick up a phone, push a button, and say find the nearest Starbucks, and then get a map and driving directions to that location, or be able to push a button and say, give me the latest score on the Yankees.

Bill Gates, Microsoft Chairman, has a voice enabled mobile local search and advertising vision, and it doesn't include the Yellow Pages.

In a Q & A last week with Joanne Bradford, Microsoft Corporate Vice President and Chief Media Officer, at the Microsoft Strategic Account Summit 2007, Gates projected a short life span for the Yellow Pages.

GATES: A lot of these interfaces will be mixed voice/screen interfaces. When you have just voice, and you say something, let's say on the other end there's three or four possibilities, that voicing of, did you mean A, B, C, D, that's really slow and kind of painful. If you're just sitting there with your phone with the screen, then it will propose those, and the idea that, okay, if it's the one on top you just press enter, if it's the others you just cursor down, take that, and press enter. Then it's far more natural. And when I call up and I say, what is the movie schedule for this movie, voice has always been super slow, I have to sit there and hope that I'm listening right at the time it says the one thing that's in my lane. If I say that, and it just comes back up on that screen, you know, I may have additional links, get more information, then it's the voice/screen interaction that I believe in because it's far more robust in the face of some uncertainty of exactly what the input is as opposed to a voice/voice interaction that is very limiting.

BRADFORD: There's a big implication that I think about to the local advertising market, and I really think that if you can do those two things in the phone, and in the screen, that you change that. So the Windows Live Local data on the phone, it's a great experience. But I think it's going to be better when I can combine the speech and the screen there. You think that's coming sooner than later, and will it really wipe out Yellow Pages?

GATES: Well, the Yellow Pages are going to be used less and less. We should be able, when you go to the service that's going to take our technology and the Tellme technology that we acquired, when you say something like plumber, the presentation you'll get will be far better than what you get in the Yellow Pages. After all, we know your location, and so we can cluster around that. We can take the information and show you the names, and then you can expand the information easily.

So, yes, I think that these things always take time, but Yellow Page usage amongst people in their, say, below 50, will drop to zero, near zero over the next five years.



Where Technology Means Business

