The case of the Windows Phone: Microsoft’s plan for tech world domination

EVAN NORDSTROM
nordev@metrostate.edu

In October of 2010, Microsoft surprised just about everyone with its release of the Windows Phone 7 platform. It wasn’t a state secret or an X-file. The world knew since the unveiling at the Microsoft World Conference held in February earlier in the year. The surprise lay in the shear obviousness of the question flying around the net at light speed. Why?

It's common knowledge Microsoft dominates the Operating System market. Netmarketshare.com reports Microsoft floating on a 92% stake in desktop operating systems. Nothing to sneeze at, considering Apple takes second with a mere 7%. The mobile market is another story. Windows Phone 7 holds on to a miniscule 1%, a percentage shared with Nokia's retired Symbian OS.

It's no surprise then that many regard Microsoft's mobile "second wind" to be as futile as the Empire's Death Star remodel (See: Star Wars Trilogy). But the software giant may just have an ace up its metaphorical sleeve.

Nokia commands a towering chunk of the global mobile device market share. Estimates vary, but the Finnish behemoth holds on to at least a conservative 20%. This is where things heat up. Back in February, 2011, Microsoft and Nokia announced a partnership. Nokia manufactures Windows phones, and Microsoft provides the OS. The idea has veritable rocket ship potential. If the device market share holds in the wake of an OS switch-a-roo, Microsoft and Nokia may de-throne the competition.

The gamut has been slow going thus far. Windows Phone 7 has been released on a few Samsung and HTC devices apart from the initial batch of Nokia phones. Also, there is nowhere near the application selection available from Apple and Android. But the new corporate duo is far from finished: no pun intended.

With the recent release of the Nokia Lumia 900 on AT&T, spikes in usage have begun appearing around the globe. IGN.com reports Windows Phone 7 has surpassed iPhone in the Chinese mobile market. Germany has doubled its users of the Windows Phone from three to six percent since the release of the Nokia Lumia 900, says BGR.com.

The gains are small relative to other competitors. This hasn't phased Microsoft a bit. They're looking to the immediate future in hopes of capitalizing on what Apple achieved years ago: Integration.

Windows Phone 7 is a bold undertaking in terms of design. Microsoft released the platform with the Metro User Interface. Instead of a home screen background with app icons, the home screen is a collection of square tiles. Microsoft is going all in with this innovation. In October of this year the company will release the first piece of hardware ever under the company's brand. Enter the Microsoft Surface Tablet.

It runs Windows 8 RT. The stripped down version of Windows 8 will rely on the Windows Marketplace. It also ships with a version of Office 2013, and a cover with an integrated physical keyboard. And it's not just Microsoft taking the plunge. Engadget.com writes that Intel is currently developing upwards of 20 Windows 8 tablets with their chip under the hood. It seems a safe bet. If 92% of the world continues to use Windows on the desktop, they may want to cash in on total product integration.

This October, the stars may align in light of Microsoft's bold move. The radically redesigned Windows 8 will arrive with Windows Phone 8 and the Surface at its side. This could be the mobile Manhattan Project that wins the war for Microsoft. But only time will tell if the trio will strike out, or emerge as the trinity of tech.