

Whrrl Offers Users a Voyage of Social Discovery



Whrrl is a social discovery tool that also gives users access to more than 6.5 million points of interest in the United States.

You are a social creature who likes to go out and spend time with friends. Wouldn't it be great if you had access to a mobile application that could provide highly personalized, Amazon-like recommendations about places to go and things to do anywhere across the United States, no matter how you connect to the Web? Pelago, Inc. thinks so, and that is why the company created Whrrl.

Whrrl is a social discovery tool that offers consumers the ultimate mashup of in-depth data and personal recommendations from the people you know and trust. "It is based on everything that you have done and that you plan to do, plus what your friends are doing, too," says Scott Hannan, vice president of business development for Pelago, the company behind Whrrl. "When using Whrrl with your friends, you can have those moments of serendipitous discovery where everyone finds just the right thing to do."

"When using Whrrl with your friends, you can have those moments of serendipitous discovery where you find just the right thing for everyone involved."
— Scott Hannan, vice president of business development for Pelago

Integrating Whrrl with S60 devices

On mobile devices, Whrrl is a Java application that easily runs on the S60 platform. While there has not been a dedicated effort to develop Whrrl for the S60 so far, Hannan notes that the company expects to take full advantage of this resource. The beta for Whrrl was released in October 2007 in the United States, and the company is working with all major U.S. wireless carriers, including a live trial with T-Mobile. To date, Whrrl is being used by tens of thousands of registered users in major U.S. cities, although you do not have to live in one of those metropolitan areas to benefit from Whrrl.

To get the word out about Whrrl, the company is focusing its efforts on viral marketing and grassroots support among consumers who tend to be early technology adopters. One example is the company's plans to foster alliances with bands and performers who want to stay in touch with their fans. "You could use Whrrl to be notified when your favorite band is coming to town or releasing a new single," says Hannan. He also expects that there will be interest among community organizations, such as participatory sports clubs whose members are looking for easy ways to get together for a workout, or food and drinks afterwards. Additionally, a Facebook application for Whrrl became available in May.



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www.whrrl.com



"We are particularly excited about Nokia's commitment to make location-based services [(LBS)] available to the global development community," says Scott Hannan, vice president of business development for Pelago, the company that created Whrrl.

Looking ahead:

Pelago expects to have deals with all major U.S. carriers, and foreign carriers, starting in 2009. Additionally, the service will make better use of existing wireless network technology and Assisted GPS, so those users on mobile devices will continue to be able to take advantage of all of the features that Whrrl provides. The main difference is that today users check in and out of various locations by notifying the service of the change, whereas in the not-too-distant future, Whrrl will automatically make note of that information.

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How Whrrl really works

At this time, Whrrl is free and available through both a traditional desktop Web browser and via mobile devices. The product can easily be used between the two channels, and Hannan says that the mobile experience is just as good as the desktop application, if not better. "Using your Web-enabled mobile phone, you know you are on Whrrl, but the application is even easier to use," he says. The software is matched to the specific device, making for a clean, intuitive user experience.

When using Whrrl, individuals instantly have access to more than 6.5 million points of interest throughout the United States. This includes bars and clubs, restaurants, movie theaters and concert halls, fitness centers and other personal services, for example. For each of the places Whrrl lists, individuals have access to 70 different data points (such as price, hours, distance, neighborhood, type of establishment and cuisine, payment options, features, and user ratings/feedback) that can be used to filter the information, allowing users to make a more informed decision. Hannan calls this sifting, noting that "as you make selections using Whrrl, other things quickly start to drop out of the picture, and with a few simple clicks you can remove all of the noise and focus on exactly what you are interested in doing."

"Forum Nokia has accelerated our plans for expansion into Europe. Nokia's connections and position of strength in that marketplace will allow us to move much more quickly than we first anticipated."

— Scott Hannan

Whrrl business strategy

Going forward, Whrrl's business model is advertising supported, using highly targeted, localized offers specific to the interests of individual Whrrl users. For instance, suppose you wanted to go to an Italian restaurant for dinner, and you have narrowed your search on Whrrl to two options. One of the restaurants features a mobile coupon that you can show your waitress at the end of your meal. It is likely that you will choose the location with the promotional offer. As a result, it will be possible to verify the choice made and demonstrate a real-world conversion to advertisers. Hannan says the company calls this patent-pending functionality passive visitization, and he expects that it will be operational in the third quarter of this year.

Whrrl fits perfectly with Nokia assisted GPS

In relation to the S60 platform, Hannan points out the natural tie-in of Whrrl as a location-based application to Nokia's Assisted-Global Positioning System (A GPS) service in the United States. "We are particularly excited about Nokia's commitment to make location-based services [(LBS)] available to the global development community," says Hannan.

Nokia uses the industry-standard location API, Location API for J2ME™ (JSR 179), which makes it very easy for developers to write location-aware applications. But JSR 179 is ultimately only as good as the location technology behind it. Using A-GPS, the mobile device gets assistance from network servers, which help by identifying the specific satellites that are above the cell where the device is located. This saves both time and battery life that the device would otherwise waste while scanning for all possible satellites.

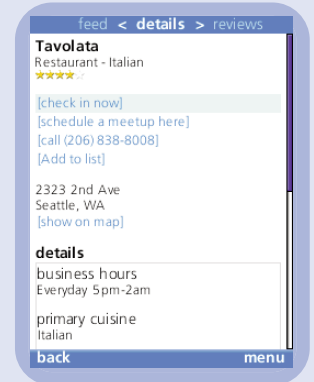
"Nokia has built out a global network of assistance servers, making them available to applications running on Nokia devices. This allows our application to get quick, easy, and reliable GPS assistance anywhere in the world," Hannan says. "We are very well aligned with one another — Nokia is a perfect partner for us," he says. In April, Whrrl was featured at the Nokia booth during the Web 2.0 Expo in San Francisco.

How Forum Nokia helps Pelago

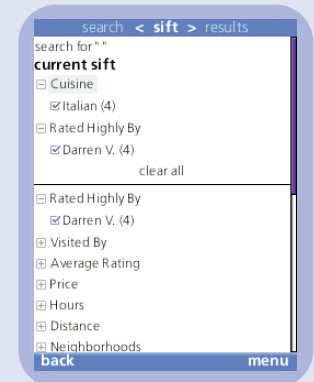
"Forum Nokia has accelerated our plans for expansion into Europe," says Hannan. "Nokia's connections and position of strength in that marketplace will allow us to move more quickly than we first anticipated," he says. Originally, the company expected to launch Whrrl in Europe in 2010, but now they expect to make it available in select countries starting in 2009.

For more information, go to:

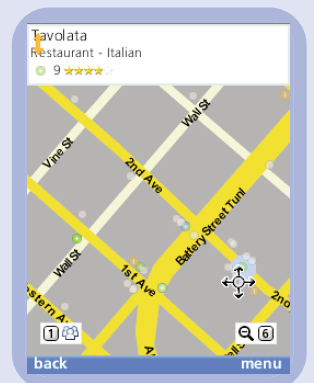
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A venue view, in this case the Italian restaurant Tavolata in Seattle, Washington.



The sift view, showing how users can quickly filter search results.



The map view shows the specific location that has been selected, as well as other places nearby.

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