

Sydus Brings Anywhere, Anytime Radio to Mobile Devices

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Music

1 Introduction

Sydus, a Singapore-based mobile-services company, is helping Virgin Radio and Bacardi & Company expand their global brands with new mobile-radio businesses.

With help from Sydus, Virgin Radio, a London-based music station, launched the world's first 3G mobile-radio station in mid-2005. Music fans can now listen to Virgin Radio's three feeds anywhere in the world and at any time of day or night via Symbian OS mobile phones.

Bacardi, a wine and spirits company, worked with Sydus to create the Bacardi B-Live radio service. Bacardi B-Live, announced in April 2006 and launched a few months later, is thought to be the world's first brand-funded global digital-music service.

Behind these innovative offerings is Sydus MobileRadio. MobileRadio, which was introduced in 2004, lets consumers listen to radio on their mobile phones; lets radio stations extend their reach globally; lets consumer brands create new radio-based businesses; and lets operators capture data-intensive revenue from mobile subscribers. "MobileRadio is not just about extending a company's presence," says Saamil Nanavati, president of Sydus. "It's about building entirely new businesses."

MobileRadio exemplifies what Nanavati calls a new, passion-driven approach to the media business. "While consumers are increasingly becoming aligned with their passions, traditional broadcasters find it difficult to push niche content," he explains. The broadcasters "can provide Top 40 content, but what about someone who is into, say, classical or new music coming out of Africa? Traditional media have not been able to deliver on that."

In his quest to help clients build passionate new businesses, Nanavati has moved Sydus from the U.S., where he and his partners founded the company in 2002, to Singapore. “[Singapore] gives us great insights into the large, growing markets of China and India,” he says. Plus, the company is now closer to Nokia, which has its Asia-Pacific headquarters in Singapore. “We have a good understanding of Nokia’s roadmaps,” Nanavati says. “That’s been beneficial.”

2 Like a Virgin

Consumers have responded enthusiastically — and quickly — to the Virgin Radio offering. Within 48 hours of Virgin Radio’s mobile launch, the service had attracted users from all six continents of the world. To date, users in more than 90 countries have clocked some 600,000 uses of the service, for a total of approximately 5 million listening minutes over mobile networks.

Consumers find that using Virgin Radio’s mobile feed is easy. They simply download a free application to their Symbian OS phones (from either <http://wap.sydusmobile.com> or <http://wap.virginradio.co.uk>) and start using the service. Listening to Virgin Radio costs them nothing beyond operators’ data fees.

MobileRadio also gives Virgin Radio an opportunity to attract a new breed of advertisers. Traditional broadcast radio serves mainly local advertisers, but because the new Virgin Radio service is worldwide, it can attract the advertising of global corporations. “There’s a section of listeners that Virgin has — people between 18 and 35, predominantly males — who listen to rock music. Some companies want to target people like that around the world, but there hasn’t been a platform from which they could do it effectively,” says Nanavati. “That’s where we kick in.”

3 Straight, no chaser

Bermuda-based Bacardi plays a mix of what it calls “uplifting party classics from the world’s hottest dance floors” on its mobile-radio station. Guest disc jockeys have been engaged to produce exclusive mixes, and on weekends the service features best-of-the-week mixes and live recordings from Bacardi-sponsored events.

Bacardi had two reasons for working with Sydus to develop Bacardi B-Live radio, explains John Burke, the rum maker’s global brand director. One was to deepen the Bacardi brand’s strong associations with party music and create a deeper, longer-lasting relationship with its customers. The other was to take advantage of the changing media landscape. “Like most other advertisers, we recognize that the digital-communications revolution changes our target audience’s media consumption,” Burke says. “Consumers are less accepting of an advertising communications model based on interruptions.”

Burke is quick to point out that Bacardi’s mobile-radio service will be aimed at all music-loving adults who are of drinking age. “The shared experience of radio as a medium fits perfectly with our brand values,” he says. “The fact that the shared experience will be available at any time, online, and on a mobile relates strongly to the free-spirited attitude at the heart of Bacardi rum.” Bottoms up!

Learn more about Sydus

<http://sydusmobile.com>

Learn more about Virgin Radio

<http://www.virginradio.co.uk/thestation/listen/mobile/>

Learn more about Nokia's media and music resources for developers

http://forum.nokia.com/main/market_segments/music/index.html

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