

## Vodafone and Others Plan Location-Based Mobile Ads

By [Jack Marshall](#) , May 22, 2009

Vodafone is planning to trial a range of location-based ad products in Europe later this year. Meanwhile, Alcatel-Lucent and Placecast have announced the availability of their own location-based ad platform, and are currently touting it to network operators and agencies.

Starting in June, Vodafone will test products including a navigation-based application on which advertisers can embed information about local outlets or promotions. A location-aware search facility dubbed "Power Search" is also in the works; that will allow advertisers to pay to top the list of local businesses related to a given search term.

"We've had a lot of interest in this area, and advertisers can clearly see the potential of it. It takes you further down that customer journey, and will provide a more powerful and engaging form of advertising," said Vodafone's International Development Manager for Mobile Advertising Jeremy Makin. In addition, he described the potential for other, possibly branded, location-based applications, such as personal fitness distance and route trackers.

Alcatel-Lucent and Placecast's offering will utilize the same cell ID tracking technology as Vodafone's Power Search system, but will offer advertisers the chance to connect with consumers through opt-in SMS and MMS communications, rather than search results. For example a consumer may choose to be notified of special offers from their favorite retail chain when they are within a given distance of a branch.

The advantage of cell ID tracking is that it does not rely on GPS technology, meaning it can operate successfully on the majority of existing handsets. According to Vodafone, this method can provide accuracy down to a number of meters. Vodafone's location-aware capabilities are currently based on technology from Wayfinder, which it acquired in December of last year.

[Last week](#), Nokia-owned Navteq announced the availability of a similar location-based solution to Nokia's Navigator application. Making use of a users' GPS location data, Navteq's platform inserts advertiser points of interest, and can offer users calls to action such as "click to navigate" and "click for coupon." The technology is not currently being implemented by any Navteq clients in the U.K., but the firm is apparently in discussions with a number of potential partners.

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