

Russell Reynolds Associates' *Conversations on Convergence* features the thoughts and ideas of top decision makers in the world of convergence. We are helping to cut through the hype around this topic by speaking directly with those who are defining the future of this industry. Read them all on our Web site at www.russellreynolds.com.



Conversations on Convergence: No. 2, 2008



David Ko, Vice President and General Manager, Yahoo! Connected Life Asia

Since joining Yahoo! in April 2000, David Ko has been a leader in driving the company's mobile business and managing key partnerships with vendors, device manufacturers and operators. Based in Singapore, he is responsible for extending Yahoo!'s mobile products, broadband services, digital home initiatives and PC client experiences. David also oversees the deployment and distribution of Yahoo! oneSearch, the Yahoo! Go suite of services and mobile advertising across the Asia/Pacific region.

Q. What is your assessment of the current state of the convergence space?

A. Convergence is something we all aspire to, even if it means different things to different people. Our business is definitely all about convergence. We saw that people were moving throughout the day from their PCs to their phones to their set-top boxes, and back. We work to bring our content to users whenever they want, wherever they are and through whatever device they are using to connect to the Internet.

Here in Asia, we are really focused on mobile-mobile services, mobile operators, mobile handset manufacturers and third-party mobile application developers. Most people in this region will have their first experience with the Internet on a mobile device. The ratio of PCs to mobile devices in Asia is the opposite of what

“Most people in Asia will have their first experience with the Internet on a mobile device.”

you see in Europe and the United States: In many parts of this region, there are four, seven, even nine mobile devices to every computer.

Q. What about content?

A. We are devoted to making it easy to find content and again, here in Asia, especially on mobile

devices. Other companies are taking a search experience designed for PCs and putting it on mobile devices. We don't think that approach meets the wants and needs of mobile users. So instead, we have created a way to search specifically for the mobile Internet and SMS. We want to make it much simpler to find things on the Internet using a mobile phone.

“We want to make it much simpler to find things on the Internet using a mobile phone.”

Partnerships play a vital role in all of this. Yahoo! is a very partner-centric company, and especially in the mobile domain, we believe we have to work together with partners to succeed. We've already announced 19 partners for oneSearch, and the number is growing all the time. And I might add, the majority of them are from Asia.

Q. Are there any special challenges that come from being in the Asian market?

A. There are three main things we work on here in Asia every day. The first is never to lose sight of the customer. We have to localize our offer to each market's specificities—which isn't always easy because Asia is a big place. Despite globalization, the number-one singer in the U.S. is likely not the most popular artist in, say, the Philippines.



The second is to stay on top of technological innovation. There is so much going on; we are looking at a lot of new ideas all the time. Plus, the innovation cycle is shortening: Japan and Korea used to be three or four years ahead of the curve, and now they are only about one or two years out.

The third challenge is educating our Asian consumers to the very existence of our services. Typically, Yahoo! interacts with its users through announcements and information relayed on the computer screen. In Asia, we can't do that: We have to communicate with users who don't have PCs at all. For example, in some markets, we've developed deals with handset manufacturers to put flyers and "how to" leaflets right in the box with the phones.

"We have to localize our offer and our service to each market."

Q. What complications does your business face?

A. Like any company involved in the mobile ecosystem, we know there are only so many things that can be controlled. There are always factors influencing the success of our services that are out of our reach. One is transparency in pricing. When people wonder how much accessing a service is costing them, it hurts everyone who provides services. People need to be able to access services and also to afford them.

Q. What are some of the human capital implications of these changes?

A. This is a very competitive market for recruiting talent, especially in regions such as India, among others, where there is a state of "hypergrowth." Luckily, we are often the number-one brand and we really resonate with people, which helps us face this challenge. You want a team of people who love the brand, who "get it." Yahoo! has

recently been named one of the 100 best companies to work for by *Fortune* magazine.

We've also found that when everyone is all spread out, it can be hard to interact. As a result, we bring people from different countries together, to sit together and work together for a few years. We love the result of having a diverse mix of people. As just one example among so many: people from Korea are very accustomed to using their mobile phones as a wallet or as a key. We want to be the essential starting point for our consumers whether they are on the Web or mobile. They bring a view on mobile services that is fresh and different.

"We love the result of having a diverse mix of people."

Q. What is on the horizon?

A. We're focusing on how to monetize our platform. Advertisers, for instance, want to promote their products and services on mobile devices, but the mobile market is so fragmented that they don't know what to do or where to start. They don't want to have to go country by country, and then within each country, operator by operator. Yahoo! could be a one-stop shop for advertisers; we could make it easy for them to reach their audiences.

"Today's mobile phones are all-in-one convergence devices."

We're also looking at expanding and creating applications, too. With the sound quality, lenses and pixel-capacity they have today, mobile phones are really all-in-one convergence devices. Applications must make it easy to use these devices to their fullest potential.

In general, whenever Yahoo! looks to the horizon, we're always going to be listening to the customer, searching for innovation, and building partnerships. That's who we are, in Asia and around the world.

About Russell Reynolds Associates

Russell Reynolds Associates is the most trusted name in global executive search and assessment. Through our 38 wholly owned offices, the firm's more than 275 professionals conduct senior-level search and assessment assignments in a range of industries for public and private organizations of all sizes. With its one-firm culture, deep knowledge of major industries and unwavering commitment to client service, Russell Reynolds Associates is uniquely qualified to help clients find the best leaders and to advise them on optimizing their talent. The firm's Web site is www.russellreynolds.com

Our Communications and Convergence Practice

The Russell Reynolds Associates' Communications and Convergence Practice sits at the intersection of dynamic digital content, which is reshaping the way we work and play, and wireless and broadband networks, which keep us connected seamlessly around the globe. We also have significant experience in helping our clients recruit in the managed services and outsourcing areas. The combination of our experience with service providers as well as infrastructure solution providers (who design, build, and deploy their platforms and networks) allows us to work at the forefront of technologies including IPTV, WiMAX, FTTx, IMS, Ethernet, 3G/4G and VoIP. Finally, our success with assisting media and content providers and aggregators to leverage these powerful new technologies positions us at the heart of the convergence movement as the key human capital solutions provider on a global basis.

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