



Press Release

User insights inspire Alloy's multimedia handset design

Based on the insights gained from in-depth one to one user research, product designers Alloy have created a vision of a more usable multimedia handset, designed to make content more accessible. At first sight, the Polygon concept looks like a familiar flip phone, but it opens up to reveal two large screens, one a high resolution display optimised for TV viewing and a second tough touchscreen that replaces the traditional keyboard. With a simple mode toggle switch and user controls optimised for each application, Polygon can be held both portrait for phone or music player use and landscape for optimal TV viewing or web browsing.

Multimedia handsets are the latest craze and networks are running free trials to encourage take-up of this new technology. Running on existing 3G phones, neither the handsets nor the interface have been adapted to facilitate TV watching. The Alloy team realised that for this multimedia experience to become real and desirable, a new kind of multimedia device was needed.

For the project, the design team interviewed typical users on a one-on-one basis and observed them carrying out a range of tasks with a current multimedia phone. The designers noticed that users found it very frustrating to find their way around the device as the menu structure was difficult to navigate. Users complained that TV viewing was compromised by the small picture. As they would mainly be using the phone in a public space, they would feel more comfortable using headphones.

From this direct user observation the Alloy team extracted small experiential details that drove the design process. The designers realised that the device needed to be compact and effortless to carry; totally simple to use and customers needed to know which device they were using and when they were spending money. The team used these direct customer insights to generate creative ideas.

The resulting concept, Polygon, has a conventional 'phone' size and form-factor, but with an internal double screen configuration. The double screens combine to provide a unique and flexible interface that changes according to the context of use and allows the device to be viewed in a variety of orientations depending on application.

One of the prime markets for mobile content is to fill user downtime when on the move. Alloy's research indicated that success in the market depends on the device being as small and convenient as a mobile, whilst being as easy to use as an MP3 player. The Polygon concept shows how you can successfully combine a number of devices without compromising the total user experience.

There is a lot of scepticism in the industry as to whether mobile TV is viable. With the right device this is a great opportunity for today's time starved consumers to access interesting footage along with easy to use internet access at a time convenient to them.

Mark Burk, a Research Analyst at Informa Telecoms & Media, comments: *'The industry received Alloy's Polygon concept phone very enthusiastically at Informa's Multimedia Handset Conference in Amsterdam. Future High-end phones will face the challenge of combining several multimedia functionalities – Mobile TV, Camera and MP3 Player – while requiring more versatile display space. Alloy's phone concept seems to be ideally suited to combine multimedia functions in one of the most innovative hardware designs the industry has seen so far.'*

Although still only a concept, Polygon is based on technology that is likely to be practical within a couple of years.

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