



p-TIPS

The gadget that ate all others (How mobile phones are changing the 'Net)

In a special section entitled "Power at last: How the Internet means the consumer really is king (and queen)," the 2 April issue of *The Economist* singles out the mobile phone as the gadget to watch, now and in the future. Stroll through any market or mall and watch how people are accessing the Internet: examining T-shirts with one hand while text-messaging friends, checking their bank account, or catching up with cricket scores with the other; eating at a traditional stall while listening to downloaded music; or shopping for spices while confirming ticket reservations. Mobile phones are entertainment centers, bank branches, marketing tools, and brand builders. Raise the productivity of your enterprise by staying abreast of these innovations in mobile phone use.

- 1) High-quality video downloads. This looks like a winning application in places where long commutes on public transport are the norm; satellite radio may be more of a hit with Bangkok's drivers.
- 2) e-Mail is so last week. Text-messaging is more intimate and immediate (and avoids e-mail spam). New phones use voice recognition to convert speech into text.
- 3) Streamline retail operations. The handsets of customers at an experimental

coffee bar in Seoul light up with menu choices, and they can order, pay electronically, and get receipts onscreen. Some boutiques already offer similar in-store services.

- 4) Payment centers. This summer Spain and then the remaining EU debuts Simpay, a service that allows all Web purchases to be put on the mobile bill. (Banks take note.)
- 5) Combining GPS with shopping. Supermarkets can provide information directly to handsets on precisely where an item is located and whether it is on special.
- 6) Marketing medium. Handsets must be "hugely respectful of users and their time" while providing desired information to niche groups.
- 7) Brand builders. As Samsung found, consumers figure that good phones equal good TVs and other appliances.
- 8) Trust consumer savvy. They understand technical specifications and how to use mobiles to best advantage. Offer customization and specialization (see 6 above) in mobile-based services.