MWC: Why Facebook and Mark Zuckerberg Matter to the Wireless Industry

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Just three years ago, the name Facebook might have been filed under “Web-based” social networking service, conjuring pictures of a Facebook homescreen displayed on a desktop PC. Things have changed.

It has most definitely taken Facebook awhile to realize its potential as a "mobile-first" company. While some of its attempts in this arena have met with only moderate success—Facebook Home hasn't exactly taken the world by storm—there is no doubt that Mark Zuckerberg belongs on the keynote stage at this year's Mobile World Congress in Barcelona.

Not convinced?

Consider that more than half of Facebook's $2.59 billion in fourth-quarter revenue was derived from mobile advertising. The company counted 945 million monthly mobile users, which was up 39 percent over the previous quarter. Meanwhile, daily mobile users grew 49 percent to 556 million. That's a mobile company if ever there was one.

Facebook is really a platform in and of itself. The service has its own app store, and the service is installed in the form of an app on the majority of smartphones in use today. The company has navigated issues that are unique to mobile, including but not limited to its failed experiment in HTML5. Zuckerberg and company have

worked with all branches of the ecosystem, from handset makers to carriers; T-Mobile's recently offered its prepaid GoSmart users free access to Facebook.

That Facebook finds itself as a holder of space on so many mobile homescreens is a testament to what it has become: a trusted (in most cases) brand that enables communications between millions of people, whether through online posts, "Chat Heads" or actual voice calls. Facebook is also privy to not only millions of conversations, habits, likes and dislikes, but also detailed location and demographics.

Aside from Facebook's own ambitions, Zuckerberg has put his clout behind Internet.org, an initiative aimed at bringing the Internet to the "next 5 billion people" on the planet that don't currently have access to the Web.

Undoubtedly, wireless technologies will be a big part of bringing those connections to people in areas without an infrastructure. In an outline of the project, Zuckerberg discussed the need to leverage white space spectrum, as well as an initiative being pushed to create an open reference design for an extremely low priced, high quality smartphone.

There is no doubt that Facebook is aware of what's happening in the mobile telecommunications industry. What makes Facebook unique is that it is a major entity that realizes its success is inextricably linked to how it addresses users on their mobile devices. Zuckerberg's talk at MWC could touch on countless topics. What's certain that Facebook will absolutely and by default be of interest and relevant to those at work in just about any realm of the constantly evolving wireless industry.

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