



Mobile Ministry Magazine

Report: Mobile Lenses for 2011

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Report Summary

This report is the compilation of two articles posted at Mobile Ministry Magazine (MMM) in January 2011 which highlight trends, opportunities, and perspectives towards the continuing implications of mobile technology on various audiences. Opinions expressed in these articles should be taken as prescriptive and noted that these only contain forward-facing statements designed to give direction and perspective. Any correlation towards products and projects by companies known or unknown to MMM is completely unintentional.

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What's Ahead for 2011

2010 was one amazing, hectic, and transforming year. In respect to mobile, the world seems to have begun hitting a stride seeing mobile as something more than a flash in the pan. That's always been the view from **MMM**. Mobile intersects with digital faith behaviors, and enables us to send and receive a lens of faith that's a bit different, a bit fresher. Chances are, in 2011, you'll refine some behaviors and push a bit more. How could that look in 2011 in areas of hardware, pricing, software, multi-lingual approaches, open source, and mobile devices.

A Mobile Lens for 2011

Mobile will continue to push towards the front of technology, health, educational, and policy conversations in 2011. What will be most interesting is the overlap. As we [talked about some last year](#), **contextualization and cross-functional knowledge** will play a bigger part in understanding the role of mobile and the impacts to digital faith behaviors. Those individuals and groups that [pollinate their mobile perspectives with multiple arenas](#) will remain ahead of trends and applications.

In **hardware**, we are still looking at more of the same from basic devices (slates, candybar, tablet, some clamshells). Storage and processor technology is again on the verge of stepping up a generation, but battery power isn't. We should see a few more attempts with device and network intelligence on devices, but only at the highest model ranges. Look at what you see as high-end right now, it will be low/mid-range by the fall.

Price points for devices will come down to roughly \$100USD for a smartphone sans contract (currently \$130-150). This will continue the transformation of some (mobile savvy) developed markets towards being largely populated with new smartphones. That said, feature phones will continue to sell huge in most markets – and the 2nd owner market should also grow. Service prices will hold steady for a bit longer before we start seeing more tiers in data service offerings with larger carriers. Keep an eye on SIM cards, these might be changing – and not just in size.



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Software will continue to go the route of paying attention to user experience and smoother user interface design, though we will get some attention paid to optimization and information security. I wish I could say that users will care about security, but situations such as [WikiLeaks](#) shows us that this will remain governmental and enterprise conversations.

Looks like we are on the verge of some jumps in the amount and attention paid to **audio and multi-lingual approaches**. However, the easiest paths for developing these solutions will continue to be with web-dependent data and transaction services.

Open source will continue as an area of opportunity and frequent barrier in software and business development. Religious content is one of the heaviest areas where DRM and antiquated processes remain, and so the change here to more fluid models is still some time off. We will see more attempts like the [Kiosk Evangelism Project](#) and [The Evangelical Exegetical Commentary](#) that will push some open source behaviors forward – the catch being with regional and legal issues which don't change so quickly.

Mobile applications will continue to dominate the conversation in smartphone-heavy markets. **Mobile web** will pick up steam after Q1 and newer devices will further blur the line between web and native applications. Would be nice to see a bible software company lead in this area – [Logos's Biblia](#) was a great stepping stone to this.

We will see people more empowered with mobile to **create their own solutions** through more app-wizard-like programs and processes. I'm not sure if it will come from the faith-based space or outside, but I can see a few groups doing more with mashup-technologies that empower individuals to create solutions, instead of waiting for a larger network to be the solution.

Originally posted [January 3, 2010](#) at Mobile Ministry Magazine (MMM)



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An Additional Mobile Lens for 2011

From [A Mobile Lens for 2011](#):

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With that background, we would be well served to look into some specific areas of mobile where mobile practices can be better seen and refined. These previously defined areas of mobile include: *Mission, Media, Discipleship/Education, Marketing/Analytics, Moment, and Spiritual/Theological*. All of which are prime for seeing more or additional inroads by faith communities and initiatives.

Mobile in Mission

We defined *mobile in mission* as those efforts which look to contextualizing Gospel messages on local and global cultural scales. This happens in business as mission opportunities, education, and technology conversations in politics.

In 2011, we can look forward to more efforts to [digitize content assets](#), increased visibility of mobile as a solution for community needs, and further experiments around [mixed-media engagements](#) which will finally lead to best practices and some consistent feedback.

What would be nice here is to see missionaries pick up on the [excellent insights happening in the mhealth arena](#), there's overlap here that helps mobile-led initiatives address community needs. And, as we've [already talked about](#), mobile as a means of access and prevention will [stay a hot topic](#).



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Mobile in Media

When looking at *mobile in media* (creating and distributing visual/audio/text stories; or, building and implementing specifications and best practices around mobile multimedia opportunities), there's more than just rebroadcasting content in a mobile-accessible format to consider – which is now understood to [not be good enough](#).

Two veins of work are happening in visual story development that will be further defined this year – professionally produced projects and user generated works. The end-result of these works will fall easily into one of these two groups. While there's [opportunity in mobile TV](#), the key is still keeping content on-demand and open to stream/view on several devices by a single user. There's no indication of a change in this space in terms of faith-based media.

Do also watch the political and industry space – the attention and conversations around subjects such as the [Comcast/NBCU merger](#), [Netflix](#), and [net neutrality](#) will have effects on media producers and consumers, in and beyond US shores. There's room for niche offerings to do something disruptive in this space that changes the complexion of those conversations.

Mobile in Discipleship/Education

We've looked at *mobile in discipleship and education* [in the past](#) and have defined it in terms of those activities which facilitate curriculum development, address targeted and special education needs, and explore new styles of learning made possible by mobile technology.

Tablets are definitely in the plans for many educators, and the work that [Fraser Speirs](#) is doing should spark others to experiment in this space. Consider here also that tablets are the big techie item this year, so it might be another year until successes with them become notable stories.

We'll be keeping an eye on how tablet uses flow into the smartphone crowd. There a [better addressable crowd \(aka more people\) with smartphones than with tablets](#), and what can happen here should point to how education continues to adapt and change to



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being digital-first for [more than just simple communication](#).

Teaching by knowledge mapping and pushing [story development by mobile](#) is growing here as well. What that looks like consistently is another question that this year's body of work can answer.

Mobile Marketing/Analytics

When looking at mobile in marketing and analytics, we can be quick to just look at the produced product. But, I want to caution that its not just in the product that's the whole story. We defined this area to also include search engine optimization, security, access, local media channel development, and then the use of mobile applications alongside and independent of broadcast channels.

So again, [a mobile application is not a strategy](#), so [how you measure the success of a mobile engagement](#) is a nut that's got to be cracked. In 2011, we'll see solutions in this space, though the smaller, effective ones will be bought out and rolled into some of the longer time entrants (Demand Media, Google, etc.).

Look forward to software development becoming easier for non-developers (more efforts like [Google's App Inventor](#) and [Nokia's Ovi Publish](#)), and discoverability being key to attracting and keeping relevant users through better analytic tools (Google Analytics, Apple's iAd, or [other noted mobile marketing tools](#)).

Personalization and recommendation engines are the major trends here to look for.

Mobile in Moment

When looking at mobile in moment for 2011, we simply ask the question of what happens with the mobile when in your personal space?

Yes, there are going to be releases of new and updated Bible software packages (we've already seen [Accordance](#), and [Olive Tree 5](#) is right around the corner). This also is the year where we'll see a significant break in Bible software – that is, some companies will target academic/high-end learners only with deeper content offerings, while others will go the route of simpler content stores and increased emphasis around



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user experiences, sharing, and connecting content to communities. Companies that straddle the fence here will have a hard time keeping viable marketshare.

The [move to digital-first is all but happening](#), and we'll see more of this individually as new authors and publishers take advantage of their existing social networks and tools like Lulu. Traditional publishing is far from going away, but they've already got their call to move to the future ([some moving faster than others](#)).

SMS/MMS will remain high on the usage side Mobile IM will not be eating into that in any major fashion. We might have seen the plateau for BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) in some of RIM's primary markets – though still growing well in Latin and South America. The cost of mobile devices continues to decline, and we might see a few more plays like [Movirtu](#) in developing markets, adding to the already stout [5 billion mobile phone subscriptions](#).

Will we see a different take on Biblical engagement with gaming this year in mobile? I think so, and it might come from the folks that do [Bible Navigator X](#) given their work already with a popular gaming platform.

Spiritual Implications

If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.

Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint, but happy are those who keep the law.

(Message and NRSV, [Proverbs 29:18](#))

Lastly, in looking at the spiritual implications present within mobile (theological constraints/precedents; psychological/cultural effects of mobile vs. other personal/connected technology media elements), we will continue to acceptance of some practices such as SMS for alerts, checking into social networks to know what's going on in your local communities, etc. But, we will also see more communities push back against the instantaneous nature of mobile and social web connections by creating different rules around use and interpretation. I wonder about the effect of the [research](#).



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[and lives of people like David Noble and Gary Chapman](#) and if we will learn from their foresight.

Questions around contemplative moments, accountability with public-facing persons, and censorship will drive many to want to better associate technological hardship as a spiritual suffering. If you will, the term “technological fast” or “Facebook fasting” will enter the vocabulary.

As with other times in our history where knowledge and understanding has increased, the rise of mobile, and behaviors because of mobile will challenge methods and doctrines of faith. Some of these questions – such as the viability and validity of virtual fellowships – will come to healthy, if not hard to receive, conclusions for some.

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Conclusion

This deeper look at what is in the ground towards happening in 2011 may pose more questions than answers at this point in understanding mobile ministry. Yet, that's to be expected. The takeaway with this report is to see that there are addressable areas within mobile which can and should lead to expanded ministry and business opportunities for digital faith and mobile ministry initiatives. Mobile is moving forward. As a area of culture which has always had the ear and eye of the surrounding environment, can you take mobile and address your communities in such ways that demonstrates your commitment to God, while also being relevant and innovative?