

## Got It Wrong #2: Mobile Browsers

3-3 minutes

---

Wednesday, February 24, 2010

This is the second post in my series on [Got It Wrong](#) posts. Posts about how I really missed a particular trend, market development, company, etc...

When I interviewed for my gig at Union Square Ventures back in '06, part of the process was a 45-minute interview with Fred and Brad. We talked about 3 different subjects: user experience, product management, and mobile browsers.

If you think about the timing... the state of the art in mobile phone browsing was either the Blazer Browser on the treo or pocket IE or the RIM browser on the BB 7250... none of which were setting the world on fire. The best way to browse on a handheld device at the time was the Opera add-on browser to the Nintendo DS, which had just be launched in Japan 3 weeks prior to my interview; the the initial reviews of Opera on NDS were pretty mixed.

So, Fred asked me, "Do you ever think we'll have a mobile browsing experience comparable to the experience on a laptop in the next 5 years?" And I said, "No."

I didn't think we would get there because we were all carrying around mobile computers that had more processing power and memory than the computers we all first used to browse web pages in the 90s. So, it wasn't an issue of technology... and even if it was a technology issue, Moore's Law would fix that in a year or two.

So, if we didn't already have great mobile browsers, then what we holding us back? Clearly not secondary technology progress.

I concluded that the form factor of handheld devices was too small to deliver a usable web browsing experience that could ever rival the experience of the web on a laptop. I tried to imagine A) reformatting pages on the fly for mobile consumption B) designing dedicated mobile web pages or C) zooming in and out of real web pages on a mobile phone... but none of these options seemed reasonable to make more than a tiny portion of the web useful on a phone.

Then, a year later, the iPhone was released, and I ate crow. I think my original analysis did properly account for secondary technologies, but I failed to account for Steve Jobs.