

HawaiiBusiness

2008 Movers and Shakers

The standouts of the 2008 Top 250 list.

BY SHARA ENAY AND JASON UBAY

(page 5 of 6)



Bill Jarvis,
President and CEO,
Mobi PCS

UPSTART

#237 Coral Wireless LLC
(dba Mobi PCS)

'06 Gross Sales \$12.6 million

'07 Gross Sales \$26.5 million

Up **110.3%**

Can You Hear Them Now?

While shopping at Times Supermarket, Bill Jarvis overheard a phone conversation. The man was on the phone with Mobi PCS customer care, troubleshooting his service. When he got off the phone, Jarvis tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Hi, I'm the CEO of Mobi. I'm here to help." Such memorable tales of customer service have helped propel Coral Wireless LLC (dba Mobi PCS) from suicide startup entering an overcrowded market in early 2006 into one of Hawaii's Top 250 companies in 2008.

"What it comes down to is we offer something very, very different in Hawaii," Jarvis says. When it entered the market, it was the only company offering prepaid, unlimited calling and text messaging for a flat rate. No contracts or credit checks were required, either.

Sounding too good to be true, people came into Mobi stores asking, "What's the catch?" There was none, and a few months after opening, business spread through word-of-mouth.

As the only local wireless phone provider in Hawaii, it has adjusted its business model to meet local needs. At launch, Mobi's coverage

only spanned Oahu, but it expanded to Maui and the Big Island in late 2007. It brought service to Kauai earlier this

year and expansion to Molokai is on the horizon. Mobi launched with three phones to choose from, which had worked for similar prepaid phone companies across the nation. But Hawaii, being the unique and “phone-centric” market that it is, needed more phones, and Mobi currently has a roster of 13 phones.

Web access also is filtered for local content. “When you go to our data offering on the phones, it might have information about a surf report, the sports events going on at UH, [or] it might have the entertainment at Blaisdell,” Jarvis says.

In February, Boost Mobile, a wholly owned division of Sprint (NYSE:S), began offering a similar prepaid unlimited call and text messaging service in Hawaii, at a lower monthly rate. At the time, Boost offered \$35 unlimited talk; Mobi offered \$40 unlimited talk. “We went around to all of our distribution channels and let them know that it didn’t look like it was a rate that anyone could do for any length of time and be profitable,” Jarvis says.

It wasn’t. Boost has since raised its unlimited talk plan to \$50 a month, while Mobi’s price remains the same. In fact, Mobi plans on lowering its rates as the volume of customers gets higher.

“Our whole business model is based on the fact that we don’t spend money the way other carriers do,” Jarvis says. Mobi never sends paper bills, and no credit checks mean no credit department. Mobi also spends very little on advertising, and instead passes the savings into the product and service.

Jarvis says he hopes the product will speak for itself and its users will become its marketing team. “If we don’t keep the customers happy, they don’t tell anybody and our business model unwinds,” Jarvis says.

Jarvis did not give any estimates for projected revenue for 2008, but says the company is still in growth mode. “We will have a continued aggressive expansion revenue plan,” he says. In addition to its wireless phone service, Mobi entered the wireless data market in June.

– *Story by Jason Ubay*

Copyright 2008 Hawaii Business Magazine

powered by RIVISTA | A Godengo Technology | [Privacy Policy](#)