

Mobile firms unite to offer single apps platform

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The Google Nexus One (L) smartphone with provider service from T-Mobile and the Apple iPhone (R), with provider service from AT&T. A group of mobile phone operators have launched an alliance to build a single platform for the hugely popular applications that allow users to play games and read news on their handsets.

A group of mobile phone operators launched Monday an alliance to build a single platform for the hugely popular applications that allow users to play games and read news on their handsets.

The goal of the 24 operators is to unite a "fragmented marketplace" and give developers of [applications](#) a single route to users of different devices and operating systems, the group announced at the Mobile

World Congress in Barcelona, Spain.

The group, which includes AT&T, Vodafone and China Mobile, has three billion customers around the world, it said in a statement.

Application stores are a key component of smartphones, but purchasers of a particular smartphone like those sold by Finnish wireless equipment maker Nokia and Apple cannot access stores provided by other makers.

In a sign of the popularity of such services, South Korean [mobile phone](#) giant Samsung announced Sunday it would expand its app store to more than 50 countries this year after launching it in three European nations in 2009.

Swedish telecommunications equipment maker Ericsson announced Monday that it was launching its own online store, open to all types of devices. The eStore already counts 30,000 applications.

The alliance launched by the 24 operators, named the Wholesale Applications Community, is backed by the GSMA, the industry group that organises the congress, and device manufacturers LG Electronics, Samsung and Sony Ericsson.

The other partners in the project include Orange of France, Deutsche Telekom of Germany and NTT Docomo of Japan.

The alliance "will build a new, open ecosystem to spur the creation of applications that can be used regardless of device, [operating system](#) or operator," GSMA chief executive Rob Conway said.

"This is tremendously exciting news for our industry and will serve to catalyse the [development](#) of a range of innovative cross-device, cross-operator applications," he said.

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