

Nokia, BlackBerry, Motorola search for lost glory

BARCELONA, SPAIN: Once the mobile world's pioneers, Nokia, Motorola and BlackBerry are now the industry's sorry laggards, searching for lost glory.



BlackBerry's new Q20 Image: [CrackBerry](#)

As they struggle to get back in a game now lorded over by Samsung and Apple, analysts hold out little hope for them.

"All those historic handset manufacturers like Nokia, Motorola and BlackBerry completely missed the boat when the smartphone arrived," said Bengt Nordstrom, head of the Swedish consultancy Northstream. "They missed the touch screen step."

Finland's Nokia, Canada's BlackBerry and the United States' Motorola all lost a lot of money in 2013.

Nokia's handset business, in the process of being taken over by Microsoft, reported losses of US\$1.07bn last year and Motorola posted a loss of US\$1.03bn in the same

period.

This month, Motorola's owner, Google, shed the business, selling it to rising Chinese smartphone manufacturer Lenovo for US\$2.91bn. BlackBerry, bought by Canada's Fairfax Financial Holdings, racked up a loss of US\$5.4bn in just the nine months to November.

"We are definitely here to compete and to win back some lost ground before the end of the year," BlackBerry's recently appointed chief executive John Chen told reporters at the World Mobile Congress in Barcelona, Spain.

BlackBerry showed off two devices - the Q20 with its trademark physical keyboard and the budget-priced Z2 with a touchscreen aimed at the Indonesian market - to help it try to claw back market share.

BlackBerry targets corporate customers

"Our turnaround strategy is to focus on enterprise," Chen said. "We are always known as the number one in security."

Analysts were pessimistic about his chances. "BlackBerry is a lost cause, I think," said Nordstrom. Lawrence Lundy, analyst at Frost & Sullivan, agreed.

"They have tried so many things in past years and nothing has worked. I can't see BlackBerry maintaining a device presence much longer," Lundy added. "They missed the touch input, they really believed in the keyboard even seeing the success of iPhone."

Nokia remains the world's second-largest handset manufacturer with 13.9% of the market last year, but that share is dwindling and it relies largely on traditional mobiles. In the smartphone market, Nokia did not even rank among the top five.

At the industry fair this week, Nokia showed off a new range of Nokia X smartphones powered by a version of Google's Android operating system. It was a surprise move because Android competes directly with Windows Phone, owned by Microsoft, which is wrapping up its Nokia takeover during this quarter.



Nokia's Android powered smartphones. Image: [BGR](#)

Nokia France managing director Thierry Amarger said the manufacturer used the cheaper Android operating system because it aims to sell the devices for less than €150, targeting a fast-growing entry-level market for smartphones.



Motorola did not launch a new phone at the World Mobile Congress. Image: [GSM Arena](#)

But Microsoft will determine the next move for Nokia's handsets. "Nokia are in a fairly good position with Microsoft as their backer," said Nordstrom.

"For Microsoft, there will be a rebranding exercise and they will spend a lot of money on it but there is no evidence they will catch up with Apple and Samsung," he cautioned.

"When Nokia was a dominant player, it was twice as big as the third player. Today Samsung is eight-10 times bigger than the third player."

Nokia will be hampered, too, he said, by being tied to Microsoft's Windows Phone system, which is dwarfed by Android and Apple's iOS.

Julian Jest, analyst at research group Informa, said Motorola may have a slightly brighter outlook after its takeover by China's Lenovo, said "That will change the dynamics of how Motorola operates," Jest said.

Motorola was the only one of the three strugglers not to launch a new product during the world's largest mobile fair.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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