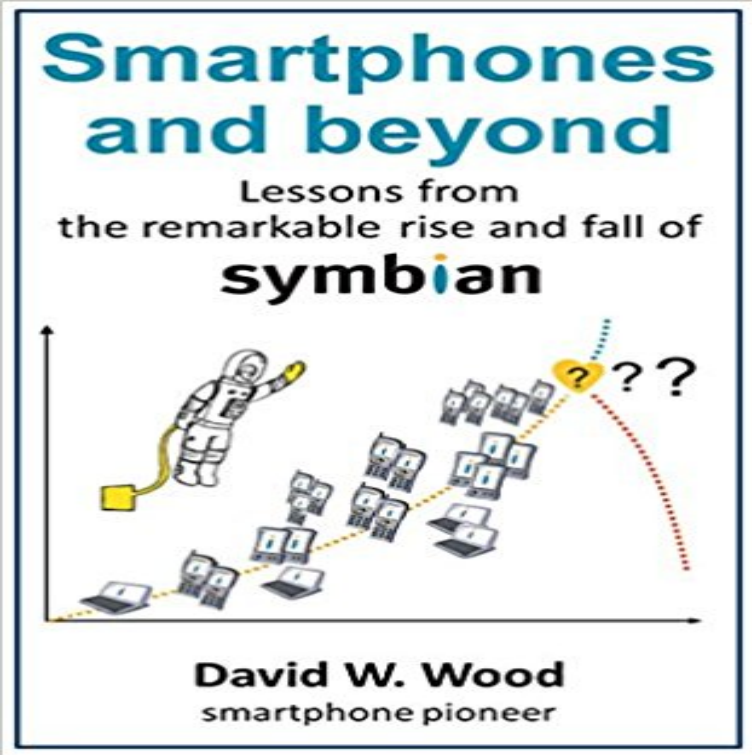


Smartphones and beyond: Lessons from the remarkable rise and fall of Symbian



Over the last two decades, smartphones have ascended to a position of enormous global impact. These multi-purpose near-miracle devices place into the hands of users worldwide astonishing quantities of real-time information. They have become major sources of entertainment, utility, and control. Indeed, every year, smartphones become ever more capable. As such, they're profoundly transforming human experience in every walk of life. But where are these steps of smartphone progress taking us? What are the core factors that have propelled all these improvements? And can we re-use some of that underlying improvement engine for potentially even more significant purposes?

In short, these are questions of the smartphone future, the smartphone past, and the wider present. These questions deserve good answers. These questions have inspired the author to set down in writing his own experiences and reflections from two helter-skelter decades close to the heart of this remarkable industry. Throughout that time period, he has been an avid enthusiast for the potential of smartphones, an active participant in many key projects, a futurist and forecaster of what might happen next, and, at the same time, a persistent critic of much of what he saw. He observed at close quarters the maelstrom of the industry, with its rich mix of stunning successes and devastating failures. He lived through a great deal which deserves to be better known. This book shares particular insight from the inside story of the remarkable rise and fall of Symbian. Symbian is the comparatively little-known company that, behind the scenes, laid vital foundations for the present-day near-ubiquity of smartphones. Despite its subsequent untimely demise, Symbian has rich connections with the future, the past, and the wider present of smartphones. The author tells the Symbian story from his unique vantage point as the

only person to remain on the companys senior leadership team throughout almost the entirety of its turbulent, roller-coaster existence: from its 1998 formation as an uneasy joint venture based around the big three giants of the mobile phone industry of that era Ericsson, Motorola, and Nokia right through to its collapse, a dozen years later, under pressure from faster, nimbler, more inspired competitors from Silicon Valley. Nowadays few people remember much about Symbian if they ever knew about it in the first place. It was a company that mainly lived in the shadows, away from public glare. But despite its low public profile, Symbian was the indisputable global leader in the smartphone market for most of the first decade of the 21st century. During that time, software developed by Symbian powered the vast majority of the worlds smartphones, as the smartphone market itself grew and grew in scale. Sales of Symbian-powered smartphones went from millions of units being sold in a year, through millions of units being sold in a month, to millions of units being sold each week. For much of that time, Symbian appeared to have the potential to be the Microsoft of mobile computing, with potential revenues and publicity to match. Symbians customers included the worlds top five mobile phone manufacturers, and many other regional leaders. But sales eventually peaked, in 2010, and fell into steep decline shortly afterwards. Ask people today about smartphones and the words theyll mention are iPhone, Android and (perhaps) Windows Phone or RIM BlackBerry. The word Symbian is a fast-receding memory. It need not have turned out this way. With different choices and different actions, Symbian could have fulfilled its vision of being the most widely used and most widely liked software platform in the world. As the book shows, that vision was credible as well as ambitious. En route, the Symbian story, warts and all, suggests many practical lessons for how to guide the future evolution of other forms of smart

technology.

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