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eBuddy Launches Mobile App

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[eBuddy](#), the Amsterdam-based IM aggregator, is turning 3 years old this week — a respectable middle age in the web startup world. And while I wouldn't go as far as saying there's a mid-life crisis coming, since the company became profitable and brought in 10.3 million unique monthly visitors to its web service as of March, the company is definitely working hard to grow and differentiate itself — particularly from fast growing Silicon Valley based IM competitor [Meebo](#).

The company, which raised 5 million euros from European VCs Lowland Capital Partners, thinks it can outshine the competition via mobile. The company just released a new java-based mobile client into private beta. You can try to [sign up to be a beta user on their web site](#), or just wait for them to open up the application to the public in the coming weeks.

Co-founders Jan-Joost Rueb and Onno Bakker took some time off of the AdTech conference last week to show us the java app. The client has a few nice functions - folding long chats to keep them in the frame, and a much more rich experience than is already available on its mobile web service.

In the short run, a mobile client might be more hassle than its worth. The company had to create 60 different software versions for 250 to 300 phones — this is the mobile world, people, not the open Internet! The company says it won't charge for the application, for now, and being able to monetize the service through mobile ads is still a long ways away. Probably the best near term return eBuddy can expect from its mobile client is increased stickiness for all its services.

In that vein, Meebo co-founder Seth Sternberg says his company thought long and hard about mobile, but decided against it right now. “As such, we don't have a releasable mobile client at the moment,” says Sternberg. Mountain View-based Meebo is backed by Sequoia Capital and Draper Fisher Jurvetson.

But in the long term, eBuddy's mobile client plans might be a smarter play, especially if it can convince a couple of carriers to push its offering. Mobile IM is just used by 6.3% of U.S. cell phone subscribers and grew at a rate of 1.2% over the past several months, according to M:Metrics. Mobile web usage and text messaging grew at a rate of 2.0 and 2.5% in comparison. With most new phones now including IM services, awareness of mobile IM will only increase.

eBuddy's mobile web service is bringing in 1 million unique visitors per month, so a not-so-small portion of its users are already interested in mobile. It might take many years to grow substantially, but the same reason that IM aggregation on the web has brought in users, mobile users will want the same functions.

eBuddy is also hoping a stronger Silicon Valley presence will help it gain some attention and new mobile users. The company is thinking about opening an office (or at least maintaining a presence) in the area and is considering raising local funding. The company already checked out Sand Hill Road for its last fundraising plans, but says it got a better valuation back home. Maybe Silicon Valley will look brighter this time around.

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Hey Katie... I believe you forgot to link what needs to be linked in this article (I can't find any!)

[amAze](#) on May 1st, 2007 at 1:31 AM - <#>

thanks, added the link in

[Katie Fehrenbacher](#) on May 1st, 2007 at 6:16 AM - <#>

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