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NEW !

Ngmoco

NGMOCO IS SHORT for next-generation mobile company, and in just over 18 months, its founders, mostly refugees from Electronic Arts, have lived up to that ambitious moniker. The 30-person company develops only for the iPhone and gives away its games, generating revenue from dozens of virtual goods and services layered into the apps. "We're building a platform, almost like Xbox Live," says cofounder Bob Stevenson.

The bigger the platform, the more in-app purchases, so Ngmoco opened up its network, called Plus+ (pronounced "plus"), to other game makers, who have adopted it because it allows players to challenge one another and post high scores on Facebook and other social media. The company says its games have been downloaded 16 million times since Plus+'s debut last summer.

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VNL NEW !

CONSIDER THE LAST mobile mile conquered, judging from the technology developed by the Indian startup VNL. Its solar-powered global-satellite-mobile (GSM) system is cheap (about \$15,000, one-quarter the cost of traditional base stations), green (it requires only as much energy as a 50-watt lightbulb and produces zero emissions), and efficient (in six hours, the equipment can be assembled onto a home rooftop, no tech expertise required, and provide service to 2,000 users within a 2-mile radius). VNL has successfully deployed pilot projects in rural Indian villages, and last December, the World Economic Forum named it a Technology Pioneer for 2010. Next up: Africa, where two telecom companies will begin rolling out VNL's system this year.



Hello? Hello?
VNL's GSM equipment brings rural communities into mobile range.

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NEW !

Aldi Süd

At a time when consumers are overloaded with choices, the discount supermarket chain has built a global empire by offering fewer: between 1,000 and 1,500 items at near-wholesale prices, versus a typical U.S. supermarket's 30,000 items. To keep costs down, its products are mostly private-label, and only cash and debit cards are accepted. Aldi Süd now operates nearly 4,000 warehouse-style spaces in 10 countries. It's set to open 80 new U.S. stores this year, for a total of more than 1,200.