Instant messaging: the story recurs
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Instant messaging’s benefits are clear. They are due to the possibility of being notified what buddies are connected to the Internet and their availability, in addition to instant communication, non intrusive and low cost. In order for the system to work, it is necessary to have a common repository and access to everyone.
If the model is built on the incompatibility of the systems, the battle to dominate the market and the standard is understandable – there are networks externalities, scale economies and an important lock-in effect.

In fact, compatibility between users is essential to many applications. From the point of view of the client, we can think of the success of 'Microsoft Word' – with one provider- or GSM telephony – with a clear standard.
The current situation is not beneficial for anybody and it could become more serious as the service becomes more sophisticated and offers access from different devices – phone, PDA, TV- and channels, and advanced customized services – using privacy preferences P3P and other related standards.

In the meantime, a limited use of the instant messaging possibilities will bring many advantages to users.
Consumers are used to the lack of clear standards, and partly for this reason, most people only use their mobile phone to talk and send SMS messages.
The lack of standards is impeding the success of the many possibilities that technology offers, among them instant messaging via the mobile phone. In Finland, the SMS message ‘Where are you?’ is frequently in the top 5. Why not instant messaging via the mobile phone when there is a proven need? The story recurs… with nuances.