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TECHNOLOGY FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING

A revolutionary new mobile product, fonetango, will be launched in February this year by Auckland-based Company SimWorks International. Fonetango will enable users to meet new people via their mobile phones.

Fonetango enables users to back up their phone and SIM address books using either SymcML, a Symbian application or a SIM card based application similar to that found on Vodafone's SIM.

Once a subscriber has backed up their phone any changes they make are automatically backed up as well. By logging into an Internet site subscribers can add, delete and modify their numbers and these changes will also be automatically updated to their phone.

Users can then check to see if other subscribers have their numbers and send out invitations to subscribers who don't have their numbers. Users will be able to use the service to make both business and social contact.

SimWorks has already gained significant backing for the fonetango system. Technology New Zealand invested in the company's research and development. Its assistance was upgraded after SimWorks gained support from Ericsson NZ, converting an initial Grants for Private Sector Research and Development (GPSRD) to its flagship scheme, Technology for Business Growth (TBG).

Ericsson has put SimWorks on its Global Development programme, Ericsson Mobility World (EMW). Market Development Manager, Jeremy Hope says both operators and consumers are demanding new mobile applications.

“We like the look of fonetango because it’s such an exciting and unique product. Phones are already such an inherent part of people’s social lives and we think consumers will embrace this new technology.

“We look at many applications worldwide and haven’t seen anything yet that combines the social networking function. This is something that has huge potential over the next 5 to 10 years, says Mr Hope.”

Aaron Davidson and Greg Amer started SimWorks in 2001. The first prototype was demonstrated in 2001, generating intense investor interest. When seeking investors SimWorks was over subscribed within 24 hours.

“Although social networking over the Internet is virtually unknown in New Zealand it’s very hot in the US and it won’t be long before it starts to catch on in the mobile arena. We want to be right there when it does,” says Mr Davidson.”

SimWorks’ fonetango service is available from www.fonetango.co.nz

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