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Stolen Sidekick helps nab suspect

By CompiledSeattle Times technology staff

The Sidekick, a BlackBerry for the in-crowd, got that rare brand of viral marketing last week, as a New York City blogger helped a friend recover one that was stolen.

The saga, played out over three weeks on the blog of **Evan Guttman** and eventually in the pages of The New York Times, culminated with the arrest of a suspect June 20 — the same day that Bellevue-based **T-Mobile USA** held a launch party in Los Angeles for the Sidekick 3.

How serendipitous. Perhaps not.

The short version, a challenge given that Guttman had posted 55 updates as of Friday, is that his friend, identified only as Ivanna, left the Sidekick in an NYC taxi. Guttman sent an e-mail to the Sidekick, offering a reward for its return.

The key to the story is one feature of the Sidekick and a growing number of mobile devices: What you do on the device is stored on a remote server, so it not only shows up on the phone, but wherever you log in to access the server.

When Ivanna bought a new Sidekick and logged in, she found photos of the alleged perpetrator — later arrested and identified in The Times as a 16-year-old girl from Queens — and evidence of her logging into AOL and MySpace accounts.

The interaction between Guttman and the alleged thief, and her friends and family, got pretty ugly. Eventually, the police were brought in.

Interest in Guttman's battle to get the Sidekick back eventually grew to gigantic proportions with e-mail and forum traffic that overwhelmed several computer servers.

Demo-lition

The demo, an age-old tech-industry tradition, doesn't always go just right.

Small screen
The number of mobile TV subscribers worldwide is expected to reach 102 million in 2010 from 3.4 million this year.
Source: In-Stat

Sometimes it's software that's not quite ready for prime time. Sometimes it's operator error. And then there's the X factor.

When **Opera** launched its new browser with a news conference in Seattle last week, a game widget failed to load, perhaps because the network it was running on got bogged down.
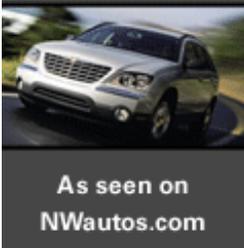
Just before the problems began, one of the tech bloggers that Opera invited to the show started uploading a video he'd just taken onto YouTube.

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Our columnist, sitting right behind the blogger, saw the loading-progress bar start and slowly, slowly advance, just as Opera's chief standards officer, Charles McCathieNevile, began having difficulties up at the podium.

Weekly vs. BizWeek

The **Seattle Weekly** had a gripe with last week's **BusinessWeek** cover for its striking resemblance to a cover it published last July.

The subject was Bill Gates' so-far-unsuccessful efforts to reform U.S. education. The headline on both covers read, "Bill Gates Gets Schooled." They both had similar illustrations: a caricature of Gates in front of a blackboard. On the BusinessWeek cover, he's wearing a sweater and sitting at a too-small school desk. Seattle Weekly put him in a suit.

Weekly Managing Editor Chuck Taylor asked on the publication's new blog, "Do journalists in New York do any original thinking at all?"

The response from BusinessWeek editor-in-chief Stephen Adler: Neither he nor his reporters had seen the Weekly story when he wrote the headline and only became aware of it when it was flagged on a journalism news site.

"I've now read the Seattle Weekly story, which is excellent. Both their story, and ours, are well worth reading," Adler wrote.

On the record

New business: NetMotion Wireless, a Seattle developer of software for wireless networks, is providing its Mobility XE product to Unilever for use by the consumer products giant's sales force.

Products: Bellevue-based **Saflink**, a biometric-technology company, said it has developed capabilities for SureAccess readers used in airport security to support proximity smart cards.

Download, a column of news bits, observations and miscellany, is gathered by The Seattle Times technology staff. We can be reached at 206-464-2265 or biztech@seattletimes.com.

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