

If one is to believe The Wall Street Journal Nokia might have an unusual surprise come Mobile World Congress 2014-- a low-cost Android smartphone featuring integrated Microsoft services.



Reportedly a development codenamed "Normandy" dating from before the Nokia handset business acquisition, the device features a "forked" version of the Google OS, Amazon Kindle-style. This means it lacks a number of Google-developed features and the Google Play app store, instead using Nokia and Microsoft services such as Here mapping, MixRadio music streaming and a Nokia app store.

But why would the Microsoft-owned Nokia even release an Android smartphone? The answer lies in the emerging markets Nokia lost following its initial deal with Microsoft. Windows Phone fails to work on lower-tier devices (the kind Symbian sat happily on), meaning Android has an all but open reign on markets such as India and China. Not to mention emerging markets were one reason Microsoft acquired Nokia to begin with!

As former CEO Steve Ballmer put it back at a September 2013 conference call, low-cost phones "are often the first connection with technology that people in many places in the world have with any kind of communications or information technology... We look at that as an excellent feeder system."

"Microsoft's missteps in the low-end smartphone market are costing it and Nokia huge amounts of lost volume," Strategy Analytics tells the WSJ.

The Nokia MWC 2014 press conference is scheduled on 24 February, and urges journalists to

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meet the company "under the tree." Will it fruit Android-powered devices?

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