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Skyfire Cancels BlackBerry Browser Until Dev Environment Improves

Posted by Eric Zeman, Apr 8, 2010 11:45 AM



Skyfire's CEO Jeff Glueck recently posted a blog explaining why the company is halting development of its Skyfire browser for the BlackBerry platform. The biggest reason? Glueck cites a bad developer environment, singling out BlackBerry's Java-based systems. Skyfire is focusing all its efforts now on Android.

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and we think we can build on that webkit engine and add cloud-based new features around it.

Pretty damning stuff, if you ask me. Interesting how Glueck calls out the API for fragmentation, which is an issue that many consider to be problematic for Android, too.

I've used the Skyfire browser on the S60 and Windows Mobile platforms. It really is great. On both platforms, I was able to watch video content from Hulu.com and YouTube.com. I really would like to see this type of browsing experience expand to both the Android and BlackBerry platforms. It's a shame that Skyfire is back-burnering its BlackBerry resources, but in the mean time I hope that means we'll see soem Skyfire magic on the Android platform just that much sooner.

[Via Skyfire]

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Skyfire thinks the future of mobile browsing -- and its own success -- rides on Webkit's coattails. Webkit is the browser technology behind the iPhone's Safari browser, Nokia's S60 browser, and the Android browser. Skyfire said it has ceased all development of a Skyfire browser for the BlackBerry platform and is committing all its resources to delivering a better browser for the Android platform.

Skyfire CEO explained in a blog post exactly why his company is giving up on BlackBerry, at least for the time being. I would love to see a response to this from RIM. Here's what Glueck says:

We see Android as a fast-rising ecosystem, with a rich, totally open developer environment, a healthy app market and a healthy advertising and search ecosystem. The Android OS has a tremendous amount of interest from handset makers and carriers, and also has a strong need for making the explosion of video more network optimized (Skyfire's wheelhouse).

The Blackberry developer environment is not as favorable for cutting-edge application development. The APIs are fragmented and inconsistent, and the Java virtual machine Blackberry requires is not efficient. While Blackberry users are desperate for a better browser - we know, and we hear them - we only want to bring out something that meets our high standards and is truly great.

The timing makes sense to return to Blackberry in the future. Blackberry has pledged to improve their developer environment in their 6.0 OS coming at the end of this year, and we can't wait to see it. Blackberry has said at that time they will introduce a webkit browser with server-side assist on html and text, developed based on their acquisition of Torch Mobile. We understand it will be a long way from able to handle native Flash 10.1 and similar rich media plug-ins,

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2 message(s). Last at: Apr 9, 2010 9:14:54 AM

EVVJSK

commented on Apr 9, 2010 9:14:54 AM

Simply another reason to go with Nokia. My Nokia E71 will run Skyfire browser just fine, no problems. Nokia/Symbian is VERY open platform and there are a nice set of free features from Nokia and other vendors to do a range of things. Although it may not be as sexy as iPhone or Android, Nokia SIMPLY WORKS and provides a fantastic alternative to these other platforms. If only the media would look at Nokia (and other Symbian phones) in their entirety and not focus simply on the cosmetics, I think more readers would bet better served.

John

commented on Apr 9, 2010 7:57:22 AM

Your wording seems to imply that Java is part of the problem, but you should point out that the Android development environment is also based on Java. There could be a problem with the version of the Java virtual machine (JVM) that runs on Blackberry, but Blackberry should be able to improve the JVM performance, and Java itself does not seem to be the problem.

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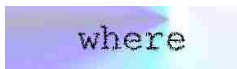
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