

Exhibit A

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Android Devices Crave Google's Attention

By [Priya Ganapati](#) | March 29, 2010 | 12:00 am | Categories: [Phones](#)



Android's smartphone army is at least 20 phones strong, plus a ragtag rear guard of e-book readers, tablets and set-top boxes.

But those oddball devices bringing up the rear are running into an unexpected challenge: neglect by Google.

Android had been created by Google as an operating system for all mobile devices, not just smartphones. [The Open Handset Alliance](#), a consortium of companies that support Android, includes gadget makers that are not just focused on making smartphones. Yet, the search giant has been treating other gadgets running Android as second-class citizens, denying them their own centralized app store and dragging its feet on putting in place a framework that would allow developers to easily create apps for these devices.

"Today Google is 100 percent focused on smartphones," says Kevin Kitagawa, the director of strategic marketing for MIPS Technologies, whose processor architectures are used for home-entertainment and networking devices. "Their compatibility tests only allow certification for these type of devices but we hope soon that Google will extend its support to other Android devices."

Though Android is free and open source, Google exercises control over what devices can access the Android Market's applications and receive extensive developer support. And, currently, only smartphones running Android qualify.

That leaves other devices out in the cold. Take Spring Design's Alex e-reader: The Alex runs Android and will start shipping next month, but the device hasn't been certified by Google, and so it will have no access to the Android Market.

Spring CEO Priscilla Lu says she's confident Google will certify the Alex once the e-reader has gone through a few changes. "We will get the certification as soon as the cellular connection is enabled," says Lu. "The difficulty is in getting the cellular module approved by the FCC."

"The Alex is really a smartphone with E Ink," says Lu.

Not so fast.

Google requires "all hardware components have the same software APIs as defined in their SDK to be compatible," says Kitagawa. "This provides consistency to third-party developers that access these components," he says.

That means devices always need to have some key components, such as touchscreens with a specified minimum resolution, a certain number of navigation keys, Wi-Fi, camera and accelerometer. Devices such as the Alex e-reader or a digital picture frame don't conform to these requirements.

"What Google has is a set of hardware requirements, down to the number of buttons and resolution of the screens," says Al Sutton, who runs a company called FunkyAndroid that offers app stores for Android devices that are not supported by Google. "Anyone can put Android on their device but at this point, if it's not a smartphone they can't pass the certification test that will let them into the app store.

In late 2007, Google unveiled the Android as a Linux-based, free, open source operating system for mobile devices that can be adopted by any hardware manufacturer. The announcement opened the doors for many major electronics manufacturers that were looking to create new devices but wanted an operating system that would go beyond the traditional Linux or Windows. Among those are Dell, whose [upcoming tablet, the Mini 5](#) will run Android.

Separately, [Google announced Chrome OS](#), another Linux-based operating system targeted at netbooks, PCs and other devices. Both Android and Chrome OS would allow developers to create apps for the platform but Google has never made it clear what kind of devices should run which operating system, Chris Hazelton, research director, mobile and wireless with the 451 Group.

That means many consumer electronics makers rushed to put Android on their devices, largely because Android came out long before Chrome was even on the radar screen.

"At this point, I am not clear where Android ends and Chrome OS begins," says Hazelton. "I hope Google is having conversations with device vendors and they are mapping out where each OS has the advantage and how they are going to build an ecosystem of developers to create apps for both."

MIPS and other companies say Google is trying to do that, but its attention has been divided and progress has

been slow. So far, Google has offered certification tests to ensure compatibility only for Android-based smartphones and Google's Android Market app store remains limited to smartphones.

As a result, last year, a group of 40 companies, mostly manufacturers from Japan, created the [Open Embedded Software Foundation](#). The Foundation aims to create standardized development platforms for Android in consumer devices beyond the mobile phone, which would allow for proliferation of apps for set-top boxes and TVs.

"You are going to see applications that are really tailored for the living room," says Kitagawa. "We are talking of apps that can be accessed through a remote control and optimized for large screens."

A few app developers such as [Home Jinni](#), an app for set-top boxes and TVs that run Android, are trying to pass Google's compatibility tests, anyway. Home Jinni is a media-center software based on open standards that collects content from different sources such as the web and peer-to-peer networks and offers support for voice applications.

Shidan Gouran, CEO of Home Jinni, says though the Android Market in its current form doesn't have a place for his app, he is confident Google won't keep the doors shut on gadgets other than smartphones for too long.

For now, Gouran is inking deals individually with companies like MIPS to put the Home Jinni app on devices. Meanwhile, he's also created a version of the Home Jinni app for the Android Market so it can reach more users.

"The Android app store is not there yet for apps created for TVs, but I am pretty confident Google wants a piece of that market so it will make a place for us soon," says Gouran.

Google declined to comment for this story.

See Also:

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ArtInvent

It does seem like the obvious thing to do would be for device makers to just establish a non-Google market for Android apps. Android is open enough that there's no reason why this can't be done, and in fact it's already happened for individual devices like Archos media player-MID's running Android. But it might be smarter in the long run for various parties to get together and set up a more universal and open market for apps. For that matter, why not just have apps available individually from various places, as happens now with most Windows, Mac, and Linux software. Having a central 'marketplace' is fine but we seem to get along just fine downloading individual pieces of software directly from the makers website or other sources.

Android is also open-source enough that non-Google support for developers should also be possible. Why not various open SDK's for Android that aren't put out by Google? Maybe it's time for the Android community to stop carping about how 'poor us, Google isn't handing us everything on a silver platter' and just start taking the bull by the horns and blazing their own trail.



ablackstormy

It also bears mentioning that Google appears to have several "top" priorities right now. Maybe time for a some long-term strategy refocusing?



Charbax

The issue here is that certain big cell phone makers like HTC, Motorola and Samsung have invested literally billions of dollars in bringing the first Android devices to the market. Because of that, Google is limiting the Google Experience to the devices released by those few large makers.

But the release of Android 2.2 for Tablets, Laptops, E-readers and Set-top-boxes is very imminent. My guess is Google can announce something to that regard at any moment now.



SoMd

This article wasn't about Google vs. hardware makers, or even Android vs. hardware makers. Google isn't telling anyone that they can't put Android on their device. It was about what apps Google will "certify" for sale in the Android Marketplace.

The rub seems to be that developers who make apps for devices other than smartphones, want to get apps into Google's centralized app store. But Google is concentrating on apps that meet certain baseline hardware requirements so that apps in their store will work anybody's phone regardless of manufacturer.

So while anybody who wants can make a device running Android. And anybody who wants can make an app that runs on those devices. They just can't sell them via Google's Marketplace.



monoespacial

This is becoming an increasingly unreliable news source. Trying to do something goes hand in hand with having some problems doing it. Having such an open software is bound to create a scene where those that sell more get more attention by the developers and Google. Is this a failure? Well, if those devices hadn't chosen Android, they wouldn't be having this problem right? They would probably have other problems, though, and I doubt Google or anybody can predict how fast Android is going to grow AND train people to give support to developers with 100% accuracy.

This article fails completely at understanding how a project is carried out and the inevitable problems which will arise with it. It should have been much more interesting if it actually gave some context and perspective to the matter at hand, instead of singling out a problem like it's completely independent of everything else.



frantaylor

This article is correct. It is beyond outrageous that Google does not send a tech support person out to

my house INSTANTLY to figure out why Android does not run perfectly on my Sun 3-60. This is totally mainstream hardware and Google is just shooting themselves in the foot, not supporting this platform.

Yes it is beyond outrageous, Google will go out of business in the next 10 minutes if they don't get Android working on every single device on the whole planet.



derek5432

So, let me see if I've got this straight...

A lot of people looking at the Android platform are already warning about fragmentation (e.g., the difficulty for developers to write apps compatible with the myriad of firmware/hardware configurations, just for smartphones). And this article is criticizing Google for not officially approving even more devices?

Ultimately it's the developers that have to design, code, and test apps to run on different configurations. Google can approve devices and provide additional tools in the SDK to facilitate the process. But are you seriously suggesting that in addition to developing apps that run well on 20 smartphone configurations, devs should also have to worry about their apps running well on tablets, e-book readers, and waffle irons?

The focus on smartphones is not "neglect"...it's realism. Android is an open platform, so manufacturers can use it, modify it, and slap it into any device they want. But they certainly shouldn't necessarily expect support from Google, especially if the device is not in the wheelhouse of what the OS does. Tablets I understand, though the Android SDK allows for creating custom skins to test non-standard screen sizes, so that's currently possible. But e-book readers? Aren't those for...reading books? I don't think the expectation is that something like the Nook should be able to play Doom.



stoffer

I think that the article misses the point. Android is Open Source and thus is driven by the community of device manufactures, software developers and users. It is a completely different business model and trying to think of Android in categories of iPhone or iPad is only testimony for a complete failure to understand FOSS.



hephail

Look at the iPod touch and you will know that Google is going to be googled, if they don't support non-smartphones!
Google doesn't know hardware!



GUSKLEIN2

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Yawn. The world according to wired: Apple is awesome, anything competing with it is doing it wrong. Yes wired, we get it. You've aligned yourself with an apple platform and you don't like android. The iPhone is amazing and everything else is shit. Fine. What you have to understand is Android is an open source operating system that looks only after the software, the hardware is not its problem and up to the manufacturer, and most importantly android has a completely different business model to the iPhone. But of course Wired knows this, they just wrote a bullshit article to drive their pro-apple agenda. You used to be cool wired - what has happened to you?

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