

RIM: BlackBerry is a Platform

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In his keynote address at CTIA 2007, RIM founder and co-chief executive Mike Lazaridis gave some examples of how wireless push e-mail became an actual platform, one that developers can use to create new and interesting software on top of existing BlackBerry infrastructure.

Lazaridis discussed how isolated and fragmented the corporate wireless industry was back in the 1980's compared to today. "Back [then], we justified putting in wireless networks [for businesses] on just the value of one field-service app, one remote tracking app, or even one customer," he said. "That's how much value there was perceived when it came to being able to be wireless and connected to data."

Lazaridis said that a lot of work went into making sure the apps worked reliably, were secure, and provided the right kind of interface and ease of use for their customers. "The problem was, the standards were fragmented," he said. "There were no real platforms or solutions we could build on top. Every project had to be justified on its own.

"[Eventually] we found that there was a killer app – push wireless e-mail," he said. "We had to overcome all the security, reliability and latency concerns, and the connectivity into - pre-existing corporate - systems... We had to do not only the pushing of the e-mail, we had to real-time sync the contact databases as well."

Lazaridis said that because they opened the APIs, other developers could connect e-mail to other company "data stores," such as instant messaging

and customer resource management.

"Wireless push e-mail became the platform to enable all the wireless data applications we've been dreaming about over the past two decades."

Lazaridis then presented a slideshow that gave some examples of BlackBerry applications, spanning topics as diverse as human resource planning, financial planning, sales force automation, field service automation, fleet management and dispatch, IT systems management, and document management and printing.

Aside from the obvious collaborative business applications, Lazaridis named some out-of-the-ordinary examples, such as BIO-Key PocketBlue, a law enforcement app that gives in-field police officers access to criminal databases, dispatch systems and alerts, and Mercury MD mData Mobile, a system that transmits lab results, diagnostic reports and patient medication information.

Lazaridis said that health professionals used BlackBerry handhelds for instant messaging each other in emergency room and intensive care units. "When I talked to the directors of these units, they were proud not just of the solution, but that they had the quietest ER and IC departments, because they didn't have to use the intercom system and voice mail," he said.

Due to the success of consumer-level BlackBerry models like the Pearl, Lazaridis touched on how developers are also creating apps more suited to the individual user, such as WorldMate Professional Edition, TeleNav mapping and navigation, and AskMeNow's mobile concierge service.

Lazaridis concluded by saying that since RIM designed mobile push e-mail the right way, it's now a foundation and platform available across all kinds of e-mail systems. "Both the developer community and IT

departments can build new applications - on top of push e-mail - by taking advantage of what's already there, and what's gone on before us," he said.

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