Ross: Firefox Goes Where Few Browsers Have Gone Before

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Blake Ross worked to build a new version of the Mozilla browser that would be slim, easy to use, and most of all, just a Web browser. This project eventually resulted in the Firefox Web browser.

In 2002 the Mozilla Foundation released Mozilla 1.0, finally delivering on the promise of an open-source browser descended from the original Netscape Navigator browser code.

But while Mozilla 1.0 received many kudos from reviewers, it failed to make much of a dent in the 96 percent market share that Microsoft's Internet Explorer enjoyed at the time.

During that same time, a teenager by the name of Blake Ross, who had started as an intern at Netscape, began work on a new project within the Mozilla Foundation to counteract the feature bloat and developer orientation that was indicative of the Mozilla browser suite at that time.

Along with Mozilla developer Dave Hyatt, Ross worked to build a new version of the browser that would be slim, easy to use, and most of all, just a Web browser.

This project eventually became the core focus of Mozilla and resulted in the Firefox Web browser.

With this decision to refocus the Mozilla project and build Firefox, Ross did much more than just create a stand-alone browser version of Mozilla.

With its strong feature set, focus on usability and adherence to standards, Firefox did something that many large software vendors have failed to do - take market share away from Microsoft and even force Microsoft to change strategies and begin paying attention to Web browsers again.

According to recent data, Internet Explorer's market share is now below 80 percent, with much of that drop going to new Firefox convertees.

For these achievements alone, Ross would deserve inclusion on a list of top influencers. But still in his early 20s, Ross' biggest influence may be still yet to come.

Blake Ross continues to work on the Firefox browser and on the upcoming 3.0 version of the browser. But Ross is also involved in a new company called Parakey, which he has said is working on building essentially a Web-based operating system.

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